

Israel has agreed to recognise PNA passports — Shaath

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Israel has recognised the validity of Palestinian passports issued by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Palestinian chief negotiator Nabil Shaath said Monday.

The passports are usually green, but red ones are issued for officials in the PNA. They are labelled "Travel Document — Passport" and bear the word "Palestinian Authority".

Dr. Shaath said he was "very optimistic" that Israel would soon free more Palestinian prisoners.

He was speaking to reporters after talks between Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres at the Erez border crossing into the autonomous Gaza Strip.

Israel would first release the 35 women who are among some 6,000 Palestinian prisoners held by the Jewish state, Dr. Shaath said.

An agreement on "safe passages" linking the Gaza Strip and the West Bank enclave of Jericho would go into effect next week, said Dr. Shaath, who is also Palestinian planning minister.

He said Palestinians aged under 16 as well as men over 50 and women over 35 would be able to move freely between Gaza and the West Bank.

PNA employees would also be able to travel between Gaza and Jericho without hindrance, but Israel would maintain the right to grant or refuse permission for other Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres, who last met on Dec. 21, both emerged in a positive mood from two hours of talks at the Erez crossing.

"We... have to overcome a lot of difficulties but we think we'll get an agreement on the second phase (of autonomy)" Mr. Peres said.

"While we are analysing difficulties, we are also seeing solutions."

"In spite of all the worries and scepticism, the Oslo agreement is being im-

plemented, although we are late in some ways."

Under the 1993 declaration of principles for autonomy, Palestinian elections were to be held by last July for a redeployment of Israeli troops outside built-up areas on the West Bank.

But the Israeli government, increasingly unpopular as attacks continue, is refusing to pull back until security improves and negotiations are at a stalemate.

Dr. Shaath also said Mr. Arafat would visit Morocco on Jan. 16 and 17 for a meeting of the Jerusalem Committee, set up by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in 1979.

Jerusalem talks

Four ministers in the PNA held talks with officials from Berlin in an East Jerusalem hotel Monday, despite an Israeli ban on PLO diplomatic activities in the Holy City.

Dozens of Israeli policemen ringed the Ambassador Hotel but did not interrupt the meeting, Palestinian officials said.

"We discussed the peace process and ways to provide humanitarian and medical aid," said Christine Bergmann, Berlin regional minister for labour and women's rights.

The talks were attended by Palestinian Social Affairs Minister Iotissar Wazir, Health Minister Riad Al Zaanoun, Housing Minister Zakaria Al Agha and Youth and Sports Minister Azmi Al Shuweibi.

Ms. Bergmann said the meeting was held after consultation with the Israeli foreign ministry, but a ministry spokesman later denied that the Israeli authorities had been informed before it took place.

The Israeli parliament adopted a law on Dec. 26 aimed at restricting official PLO activities in Jerusalem.

The law prevents the PLO or the PNA from opening a mission in East Jerusalem without prior Israeli permission, or organising public meetings there.



RABIN ABUSED: Israeli policemen pull young Jewish boys out from the western wall in Jerusalem's Old City as they were disturbing Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin's tour of the city on Tuesday. The group of ultra-orthodox Jews accused Mr. Rabin of treachery chanting "Traitor, traitor get out of here" before being removed by security services. They also charged Mr. Rabin with preparing to allow Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to visit Jerusalem. Mr. Rabin went to the wall on a tour of Jerusalem's quarters with the mayor, Ehud Olmert (AFP photo)

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Egyptian mufti calls Rushdie book 'lies'

NEW YORK (R) — The grand mufti of Egypt Mohammad Sayyid Tantawi said Monday a controversial novel by British author Salman Rushdie was "a collection of lies and a collection of insults and slanders."

But he sidestepped the issue of the death sentence imposed on the Indian-born writer in 1989 by the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on grounds that his book, "The Satanic Verses", blasphemed Islam.

Dr. Tantawi, now on a visit to the United States, told a news conference: "As mufti of Egypt, I am opposed, I am opposed, I am opposed to killing. At the same time I am opposed to lying. I am opposed to lying."

The mufti, appointed by the Egyptian government, is the highest Islamic authority in the country and issues opinions on various issues involving the interpretation of

Islamic law. Speaking through an interpreter, Dr. Tantawi said the country where Mr. Rushdie lived should select three religious scholars — a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim — who should study his book, discuss what he had written and ask the author the source of his insulting assertions regarding the Prophet Muhammad and Islam.

"All objective laws specify a punishment for anyone who speaks lies against others," Dr. Tantawi said.

"After the (panel's) discussion of what Rushdie has written, I will be satisfied with their judgment," he added.

"What Salman Rushdie has written is a collection of lies and a collection of insults and slanders which cannot be uttered by a decent human being."

"My judgment, therefore, is that Salman Rushdie is a religious-less person whose

chief pursuit is the pursuit of wealth."

Dr. Tantawi, who was accompanied by the president of the Protestant churches in Egypt, Dr. Samuel Habib, said the intention of his visit was to "demonstrate to the American people the tolerant face of Islam... and that Islam and Muslims seek to extend the hand of friendship and of justice to anyone who wishes to reach out also in friendship and justice."

He declined to comment on the trial, which opened in New York earlier in the day, of a blind Egyptian cleric, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, and 11 of his followers accused of plotting to bomb U.S. landmarks.

The matter was now before an American court and "it is our custom and practice in Egypt that we do not address ourselves to a case that is in the hands of the legal system," he said.

Islamists destroy mausoleums

ADEN (AFP) — Islamic fundamentalists have destroyed several mausoleums honouring senior Yemeni clerics in a campaign against the monuments which they consider to be un-Islamic, newspapers reported.

The daily Al Thawra said "extremist elements" used dynamite to blow up the Mohammad Ben Ali Mausoleum overnight Saturday in the Waht area of the southern governorate of Lahj.

Other reports said the Ahmad Hamid Al Aidarus mausoleum in Al Gawaze village, 195 kilometres south of the capital Sanaa, was blown up Friday.

The papers said similar attacks on mausoleums were carried out in the past few days in other regions, including Zaidiya, 225 kilometres west of Sanaa.

Jordan undergoes cautious change

By Jack Redden
Reuters

AMMAN — King Hussein, seeing both dangers and opportunities in Jordan's peace treaty with Israel, has come down on the side of caution with a government of familiar faces led by a former armed forces commander.

The newspaper Al Ra'i said the focus of the government sworn in on Sunday evening had been defined in the naming of Sherif Zeid Bin Shaker as premier for the third time in six years: "The letter of designation reflects a continuity in governing."

For months, before and after the signing of a peace treaty with Israel last October, members of the government and Royal family had talked of the need for quick reforms to capitalise on the economic opportunities presented by ending 46 years of conflict.

However, there has also been a growing effort to dampen Jordanian expectations against quick benefits and repeated warnings that opposition to the peace treaty would be tightly controlled.

The need to overhaul the business atmosphere was mentioned as the government was changed, but diplomats noted an emphasis on maintaining stability as Jordan enters an unpredictable post-peace world.

"That's been the message for months: 'Whether you like it or not, Jordan has signed a peace with Israel and that's the way it's going to be,'" said a Western diplomat, who predicted little economic innovation.

The tone is set by the choice of Sherif Zeid to head his third government in six years. His first term was in 1989 when he was called in to take over when the previous government was forced from office by price riots.

Sherif Zeid, a close friend of the King, and member of the Hashemite Royal family, had been commander of the Armed Forces for 12 years until 1988.

A profile of the returning prime minister in the Jordan Times newspaper quoted him as saying: "I do not consider myself a professional politician. I am a professional soldier, which

is the job I have chosen from the beginning."

For his new 31-member cabinet, Sherif Zeid tapped more than 10 men from his previous governments. More important, former colleagues held key portfolios such as finance, foreign affairs, industry and trade.

The peace treaty with Israel, while a momentous step after decades of animosity, has not by itself solved any of Jordan's political and economic problems.

In the Arab World, it remains shunned by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, while signing a treaty further strained cool relations with Syria, still deadlocked in its own peace talks.

A collapse in the increasingly precarious Israeli-Palestinian peace would have repercussions inside Jordan, where many believe a majority of the population is originally Palestinian.

Inside Jordan, the peace treaty holds the promise of economic opportunities, but aside from the almost instantaneous rise in Israeli tourism, Jordanians will not feel an improvement in their own lives in the near future.

In the weeks preceding the King's decision to switch from Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, the man who signed the peace pact, officials and even the King have been playing down hopes of a quick peace dividend.

When an Israeli chamber of commerce delegation visited Amman this month, a dinner hosted by the new Israeli embassy attracted scores of guests. But less than 10 were Jordanians — including one government official — while the rest were foreigners.

In appointing the new premier, King Hussein alluded to the fears of outright opposition to Jordan's new path with Israel or a growing disappointment.

The switch, he said, came at a time "when we see people are obsessed by various feelings of optimism or expecting drastic changes in their lives in the era of peace and as we witness others discouraged, as they are not convinced by peace and are acting towards its failure."

Islamic scholars should promote dialogue — Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — Scholars in the Muslim World should promote dialogue as an alternative to violence and teach respect for alternative points of view, Kuwait's Islamic affairs minister was reported on Tuesday as saying.

The minister, Ali Al Zneini, was speaking at a conference on trends in the Islamic World on Monday.

"He urged scholars to focus... on developing dialogue as an alternative to violence and noted that violence with weapons, although widespread, is not the kind (of violence)," Al Qabas daily reported.

"Islamist activists ask others to respect their freedom and work. This subject has to be included in the political and cultural programme of Islamists... because you cannot take and not give. That is an extremely important issue."

Mr. Zneini, an Islamist with a reputation as a moderate, was appointed in April 1994 in a cabinet reshuffle seen as reducing Islamist influence in the government.

In the intervening months

a campaign by fundamentalist members of parliament to make society more Islamic has suffered a series of setbacks, notably in social and educational policy.

The government has tightened oversight of Kuwaiti charities accused of funneling money to overseas Islamic militant groups. The charities deny the accusations.

"Islamist youngsters are being trained to reach for power to Islamise (societies) while there is more than one Islamic country where this movement reached power and nothing of that (Islamisation) happened," Mr. Zneini was reported as saying.

He said he would like Islamic law, partly the basis for Kuwait's legal code, to be developed with "moderation... and in keeping with the time."

"The widening of the gap between interpretation (of Islamic rules and traditions) and the spirit of the age has caused a big gap that Islamic communities have started to reject," he was reported as saying.

Afghan fighting threatens peace bid

KABUL (AFP) — Forces loyal to Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani have bombed an airbase south of Kabul in response to attacks by rival factions against Ghazni, the provincial capital, military sources said Tuesday.

"Last night our jets bombed the enemy's airbase in Logar," a pro-Rabbani military commander told AFP.

He said the Dasht-i-Sakhawa airstrip had been used over the past four nights by the alliance forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum to fly some 400 troops from northern Afghanistan to south Kabul.

Four days ago, Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezbe-Islami faction fighters were alleged to have attacked the provincial capital Ghazni, 145 kilometres south of Kabul, but were repelled in a



Burhanuddin Rabbani counter-attack that included strikes by pro-Rabbani jets, the military sources said.

Ghazni is reportedly back under the control of forces loyal to Governor Qari Baba, who is an ally of Mr. Rabbani.

According to pro-Rabbani military sources, the Dostum reinforcements were intended to bolster Mr. Hekmatyar's military efforts against Ghazni.

The renewed fighting came in the middle of a peace mission by U.N. special envoy Mahmood Mestiri, who Tuesday was scheduled to meet Dostum in Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan before flying to the western capital Herat.

Some Kuwait detainees held 4 years — deputies

KUWAIT (R) — Some inmates at a Kuwaiti detention centre for expatriate awaiting deportation have been held there for four years, members of parliament said in a statement published on Tuesday.

The numbers of inmates at the Talha centre has risen to 335 from 350 in January last year, parliament's human rights committee, which toured the facility on Monday, added in a statement published in newspapers.

The statement did not say how many people had been in Talha for four years or give their nationality. But diplomats have said on average around 10 per cent of the inmates have been in the facility for a year or more.

Talha, a converted school, was set up after the 1991 Gulf war. Its inmates include foreign convicts in criminal and national security cases who have completed prison terms and are awaiting deportation.

It also houses people who lack work permits, some of them Iraqi job-seekers who have been unable to find work from employers hostile

to Iraq because of its 1990-91 occupation.

The Kuwaiti government says it will not force the Iraqis to go back home and international humanitarian organisations say many third countries are unwilling to accept them as refugees, so they are stranded for the time being at Talha.

In April 1993 newspapers said Talha then held about 150 people and forecast the numbers would decline. Parliament and human rights activists have criticised conditions at the facility, notably for overcrowding.

"The parliamentarians' statement published in the English-language Arab Times and Kuwait Times said they had found some conditions had improved over the past 12 months but others remained in need of improvement and officials had promised to carry this out."

The lawmakers, who met detainees and received oral and written complaints, said the centre lacked what they called essential facilities for the elderly and those needing special care.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fiancee admits dismembering Turk lawyer

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish woman angered by the sexual advances of her fiancée told police she murdered him on New Year's Eve and hacked his body into seven pieces, the Cumhuriyet daily said on Tuesday. Seven pieces of Akar's body were found last week in plastic bags in a ventilation shaft of the building where he and his fiancée lived in separate flats, but his head was missing. Fatma Aydin, 21, told police she knifed Akar for making sexual advances and then burnt the head in the stove. The paper said. Both were known to be religious Muslims. The paper said.

Egypt to launch TV satellite in 1997

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt is planning to launch a television satellite covering Arab countries in 1997, Information Minister Safwat Al Sharif has announced. "Work on setting up the satellite which will start in the middle of the year will last between 18 to 20 months," he told the official agency MENA. He added that 12-station Nile-Sat would cover the Arab region from Algeria in the west up to the border with Iran in the east as well as certain Asian and African countries. He added that Egypt was to launch its eighth television channel this year. Unlike the newspaper industry, the state has a monopoly over the audio-visual sector.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:00	..... Diptodo
17:30	..... Thalassa
18:30	..... Musique Sans Frontiers
19:00	..... News in French
19:30	..... Home Improvement
19:45	..... E=M6
20:00	..... Life in the Freezer
20:30	..... Quantum Leap
21:10	..... Law and Order
22:00	..... News in English
22:20	..... Soave River
PRAYER TIMES	
05:10	..... Fajr
05:32	..... (Sunrise) Ouda
11:43	..... Dhur
14:30	..... 'Asr
16:53	..... Maghreb
18:15	..... 'Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Sweith, Tel. 510740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 63785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590, Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757, Terrasanta Church Tel. 623566	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 62543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 773131	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Assiout International Church Tel. 652326	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 854328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Temperatures are expected to drop slightly with winds southerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.	
Min./Max. Temp.	
Amman	4/14
Aqaba	12/22
Dead Sea	3/17
Jordan Valley	11/20

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 16, Aqaba 23. Humidity
readings: Amman 29 per cent,
Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL
TELEPHONE
NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Jassir Maraga 776149
Dr. Nidal As'ad 751672
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjoub 783523
Dr. Ghazi Abdullah 844286
First pharmacy 661912
Farid's pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairokh pharmacy 626772
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 649493
Shawwan pharmacy 637660
Nairokh pharmacy 626772
Najib pharmacy 847632

IBRD:

Dr. Ali Al Shogairi 246140
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Rashid Attallah 984424
Khalil's pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 617121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 986390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 602800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Repairs 623101
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-3320
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-3320

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Henness Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amm 642816
Alkhalid Maternity, J. Amm 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malina, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 664171/4
Shamsi Maternity 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/57
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Al-Ahli, Abdali 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 775112/6
Army, Shamsi 891611/15
Queen Abla Hospital 602240/50
Al-Haram Hospital 674133
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)983323
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)983323
Al-Hikma Modern Hospital (09)983323

IBRD:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Geeth Catholic Hospital (02)272775
De Al Natives Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)914111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
(Terminal 1)

07:45 Aqaba (RJ)
08:30 Jeddah (RJ)
08:35 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:05 Larnaca (RJ)
15:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
16:35 Istanbul (RJ)
16:45 Frankfurt (RJ)
17:25 Istanbul (RJ)
18:10 Brussels, Vienna (RJ)
18:35 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:35 Rome (RJ)
18:10 Toronto, Montreal (RJ)
23:40 Beirut (RJ)
06:20 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:35 Cairo (MS)
10:30 Sana'a (YV)
10:30 Jeddah (SV)
11:05 Rome (AZ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
(Terminal 1)

05:30 Aqaba (RJ)
06:30 Rome (RJ)
10:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
10:30 London (RJ)
10:50 Tunis, Comblance (RJ)
11:00 Istanbul (RJ)
19:10 Colombo (RJ)
19:10 Beirut (RJ)
19:10 Cairo (RJ)

Pakistan and U.S. play down nuclear differences

ISLAMABAD (R) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry, starting a two-day trip to Pakistan Tuesday, expressed hopes for a broader security dialogue and both sides sought to play down their dispute over nuclear policy.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said his visit, the first by a U.S. defence secretary for 12 years, showed that relations were developing despite a U.S. ban on military aid imposed in 1990 over suspicions about Pakistan's nuclear policy.

"Both countries have broadened the nature of their relationship to encompass other matters, particularly investment and peacekeeping cooperation worldwide," Ms. Bhutto told reporters.

"There are differences between the U.S. and Pakistan — no two nations can agree all the time," Mr. Perry said in a statement after landing in the Pakistani capital from Israel.

"But I'm not here to dwell on what might be wrong in our relationship — I'm here to promote a broader security dialogue that will help us build on what's right about it."

During the cold war, the United States lavished military and economic aid on Pakistan, the main conduit for Western aid to Afghan guerrillas fighting Soviet occupation.

But after the Soviet Union's collapse, the U.S. Congress penalised Pakistan for nuclear weapons ambitions, which it denies, cutting off all military and economic aid.

Mr. Perry now faces the tricky task of persuading his hosts that Washington's expanding defence ties with India, the next stop on his four-nation tour, will not be at their expense.

Ms. Bhutto, speaking shortly before scheduled talks with Mr. Perry, said the United States was no longer pressing Pakistan to sign an international nuclear non-proliferation treaty or roll back its nuclear programme unilaterally.

"As a result of our discussions over the past several months, the United States now accepts Pakistan's position that it is neither fair nor feasible for Pakistan to accept unilateral obligations and restraints," she declared.

Ms. Bhutto said Pakistan and the United States shared concern about the prospect of a missile and nuclear arms race in South Asia and would work together to promote global and regional understandings on nuclear non-proliferation.

Mr. Perry held talks with Defence Minister Aftab Shaaban Meemari which he said would cover military cooperation as well as ways to make inter-organisational peacekeeping more effective.

"One focus of my talks will be the issue of international peacekeeping," Mr. Perry said. He said the United States "greatly appreciates the extensive contributions Pakistan has made to U.N. peacekeeping operations," especially in Somalia.

India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 but says its nuclear programme is peaceful. Pakistan says it has the capacity to make nuclear arms but has decided not to. It refuses to sign the non-proliferation treaty unless India does.

The U.S. suspension of aid to Pakistan froze the sale of 71 F-16 fighters and other military equipment. Ms. Bhutto said Pakistan wanted Washington to deliver the goods or return the \$658 million paid for the undelivered aircraft.

Asked about suggestions that the United States might find a new buyer and refund the proceeds to Pakistan, Ms. Bhutto said this was possible if the money was repaid in full.

"As far as we are concerned we want either the planes and other equipment, or our money back," she said.

Mr. Perry is the latest of several senior U.S. officials to visit Pakistan in recent months. In October, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary led a presidential mission to Islamabad during which American businessmen signed agreements which could result in private-sector energy investments worth \$4 billion.

Meanwhile, Mr. Perry kicks off a string of visits by senior American officials to India this week as the two nations bury cold war antagonisms and try to build a powerful new partnership.

Mr. Perry, the first U.S. defence secretary to come to India since the Soviet Union broke apart, is to arrive in New Delhi Thursday for a three-day visit aimed at strengthening fledgling defence ties.

He is to meet Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, who is also defence minister, as well as Home (interior) Minister Shankarrao Chavan. He is scheduled to observe a joint army-air force exercise and visit an army training school.

Spurred by India's free-market policies, bilateral business is booming. Last week alone, Levi Strauss, Anheuser-Busch and American Telephone and Telegraph (ATT) all announced new projects in the world's second most populous nation.

"U.S.-Indian relations are growing rapidly in the economic sphere," Brahma Chellaney of the Centre of Policy Research said. "It's apparent to both that unless political and strategic ties grow, it will be difficult to pursue economic ties."

U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, accompanied by more than two dozen senior American business executives, is to arrive in New Delhi Sunday, the day after Mr. Perry wraps up his tour.

Ms. O'Leary is set to pay her second visit in a year in February, and U.S. President Bill Clinton's wife, Hillary Clinton, is considering a trip later in the winter, diplomats said.

U.S.-Indo defence relations were put on a new course with the disintegration of India's former ally, the Soviet Union.



Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (right) shares a joke with U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry during their meeting Tuesday. Mr. Perry arrived this morning for a two-day official visit to Pakistan (AFP photo).

Gingrich asks House historian to quit

WASHINGTON (R) — House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich Monday evening fired his newly appointed House historian after learning that she helped block federal funds for a school curriculum on the Holocaust because it did not present the views of the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

Mr. Gingrich appointed the 47-year-old Christina Jeffrey, an assistant professor of political science at Keneshaw State University in Georgia where Mr. Gingrich once taught, in mid-December, but her appointment was not officially announced and became public only a few days ago.

Reports of her involvement in the 1986 incident — which caused a furor in Washington and prompted at least one congressional hearing — began to surface late Monday, prompting immediate outcry from major Jewish groups and two New York legislators.

Mr. Gingrich's spokesman Tony Blankley said the speaker had left a message for Christina Jeffrey asking for her resignation, but had not yet spoken with her directly.

Mr. Blankley said Ms. Jeffrey served on a Department of Education panel which was set up to review a curriculum entitled "Facing History and Ourselves," but the panel rejected a \$70,000 grant for the programme because it was not balanced or objective.

At the time Ms. Jeffrey, whose name was then Christina Price, wrote, "the programme gives no evidence of balance or objectivity. The Nazi point of view, however, is still a point of view and is not represented, nor are the views of the Ku Klux Klan," according to the Cable News Network.

Mr. Blankley said neither Mr. Gingrich nor his staff was aware of the incident because Ms. Jeffrey had married and changed her name in the interim.

"No one was aware of it," he told Reuters. "Newt just learned of the incident (which happened) six years ago, and upon corroborating those facts, has asked for her resignation this evening."

A White House spokeswoman said Mr. Gingrich's move to fire Ms. Jeffrey was

"an appropriate step and a prudent decision."

A spokesman for the World Jewish Congress praised Mr. Gingrich for moving swiftly on the matter.

In its Tuesday edition, the New York Times quoted Ms. Jeffrey as saying Monday that she had no intention of stepping down.

"It wasn't the kind of thing I would have said if I had known it was going to be in the New York Times. It has never been my position that you ought to be going out and finding the KKK and bringing them into the middle-school classrooms."

Mr. Gingrich's first days as speaker have been dogged by controversy, beginning with remarks by his mother last week to CBS television in which she said her son thought first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was "a bitch."

Monday's developments on Ms. Jeffrey were reminiscent of problems President Bill Clinton had with key appointments early in his administration after background checks failed to turn up information on their past conduct or views.

Fire rages on at Indian oil rig

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An inferno raged on for a third day Tuesday at an oil installation off the southern Indian coast after destroying a drilling rig in one of the country's worst oil well disasters, officials said.

The fire, which broke out after a gas blow-out Sunday, was described by officials in the state of Andhra Pradesh as "awesome and unique," the Press Trust of India (PTI) said in a dispatch from the state capital Hyderabad.

"It may take 10 days to 40 days to cap it," an official of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) told the news agency.

"We have already com-

enced the first phase of an exercise to clear the debris within 500 metres."

The ONGC, India's biggest oil exploration agency, was seeking technical help from an unidentified U.S. company with expertise in handling such disasters, PTI said.

Intense heat within 300 metres of the burning installation prevented personnel of the ONGC from reaching the Bay of Bengal site off the coastal district of Kakinada, the news agency said.

Disaster control equipment was moved to the district from other oil centres in India while 5,000 people living

near the coast were evacuated as a precautionary measure, said ONGC Manager Rangarajan.

The disaster caused no casualties and no damage to the environment is feared, Mr. Rangarajan was quoted as saying by PTI. The situation was "well under control and there was no cause for panic," he added.

The \$3-million drilling rig at the site has, however, been destroyed by the fire which erupted 10 minutes after the gas blow-out.

It was one of the worst disasters at an Indian oil well, and a million cubic metres of gas (35 million cubic feet) was being burned daily.

U.S. to scrutinise aid to Africa

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Assistant Secretary of State George Moose said Monday aid to Africa would come under close scrutiny following calls for cuts in foreign aid from Republicans who have taken control of Congress.

But Mr. Moose, the senior State Department official responsible for Africa, said he believed a high level of assistance would be maintained, provided the government was able to convince Congress of its effectiveness.

"I remain convinced that we will be able to convince... the people in this country, broadly, that the actions and activities that we are engaged in represent a significant investment for the United States," he said.

Mr. Moose said the United States spent a total of roughly \$3 billion in Africa in 1994, including aid, investment in peacekeeping operations and democracy-building initiatives. This included a development fund of just over \$800 million.

Several conservative Republicans, who swept to power in Congress for the first

time in 40 years last November, have urged deep cuts in foreign aid as part of efforts to trim expenditure and balance the U.S. budget.

Among them was Jesse Helms, incoming chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which has a major say in directing U.S. aid. He has said much U.S. aid has "gone down foreign ratholes to countries that constantly oppose us."

Mr. Moose, who faces tough negotiations to maintain African aid at its current level, conceded that this was "a time for resource restraints... in every country around the world."

He warned African states there would be a rigorous check on the effectiveness of U.S. investment in the continent, which faces a raft of ethnic and political conflicts undermining efforts to develop and sustain democracies.

The debates with sceptical members of Congress would create an opportunity "to examine precisely how well we are doing and to explain and justify that," he said.

The goal of U.S. involvement in the continent was to create a more secure international environment and more trading and investment opportunities for Americans, he said.

He also said there was a "broad constituency of support in this country for internationalism" and said Americans, proud of their country's role as a "beacon of democracy and freedom," would respond generously to Africa's needs.

He said during 1994 there had been democratic progress in some cases, notably South Africa but also Mozambique, Malawi and the Central African Republic, but there had been severe setbacks, as in Rwanda, Gambia and Sudan.

He said lessons from the year included the need to improve organisations coping with the continent's problems, including the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, and for the United States to work more closely with European countries to avoid duplication in assistance programmes.

New White House spokesman debuts

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The new White House spokesman Michael McCurry marked his first day on the job Monday vowing to revamp President Bill Clinton's much-maligned media relations office.

"We're going to change some things about the way we do business," Mr. McCurry said relaxing in his office armchair during the informal briefing. "I know there's a lot of excitement in the press office about doing things differently."

The White House is hoping McCurry's appointment will improve the image of its communications staff, who are generally young and inexperienced.

The 40-year-old former State Department spokesman and Washington insider was tapped last week to replace Dee Dee Myers, who was often criticised for not being well enough informed.

Ms. Myers, 34, was the first woman to serve as White House press secretary and she has complained that she was not given the access to the president and his top aides necessary to do her job.

Mr. McCurry told the White House press corps he would do his best to turn

things around.

"I want to know what the president thinks and the administration is thinking," he said, promising to be "consistent with my obligations to answers."

Mr. McCurry said he would not give a formal briefing before next week.

Hubble spots collision between 2 galaxies

BALTIMORE, Maryland (AFP) — The Hubble space telescope has photographed a rare and spectacular head-on collision between two galaxies that offers new insight on the birth of star systems, NASA said. A picture taken with a Hubble camera on Oct. 16 "provides a new opportunity to study how extremely massive stars are born in large fragmented gas clouds," the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said in a statement. The image shows the Cartwheel Galaxy surrounded by a ring-like feature some 500 million light-years away in the constellation Sculptor. The "ring world" was caused when a smaller intruder galaxy careened through Cartwheel's core, sending a ripple of energy into space, plowing gas and dust in front of it. The cosmic shockwave, expanding at 320,000 kilometres an hour (200,000 miles per hour), gave birth to several billion new stars in a ring that is so large the entire Milky Way would fit inside.

Kaunda told not to gripe about lousy car

LUSAKA (R) — Former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda says his government car is a wreck but people who served under him are to blame, a government official said Tuesday. "The ministry will give Kaunda a new vehicle when a new fleet of cars is ordered for leaders. Until then, the former president should make do with what he has been given," Deputy Works and Supply Minister Siyoto Kanyanda said after Mr. Kaunda complained about the state of his Toyota at the weekend. The minister said the cars were inherited from Mr. Kaunda's United National Independence Party, which was ousted in democratic elections in 1991, and he said its leaders were responsible for damaging the vehicles.

Thai man marries 2 sisters

BANGKOK (R) — A Thai man married two sisters at the same time after the younger woman threatened to commit suicide if he did not also marry her, newspapers reported Tuesday. More than 500 well-wishers attended the wedding Monday of Pratuang Bamruangchep, 28, and his two brides, Thantham Kachabal, 18, and Aurathai Kachabal, 16, in the eastern Thai province of Chantaburi, the papers reported. Pratuang had planned to marry Thantham but later decided to marry Aurathai as well after she fell in love with him and threatened suicide if she were rejected, the papers said. Bigamy is illegal in Thailand but the reports did not say if Pratuang would attempt to register officially both of his brides.

S. Korean Red Cross president knighted

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean Red Cross President Kang Young-Hoon has received an honorary knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for promoting friendship between South Korea and Britain. British Ambassador to Seoul, Thomas Harris, announced here Monday that Mr. Kang had been honoured for the leading role he has played since he assumed the Korean chairmanship of the Korea-Britain forum and as chairman of the Korea-Britain Society. The presentation of the award of Mr. Kang, a former South Korean ambassador to London, will be held some time in February, he said.

Mother kills drug-addict son

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) — A mother shot and killed her drug-addict son Monday after he threatened her for money to finance his habit, police said. The woman, in her 60s, was arrested after calling police and telling them she had killed her son Gilles with a shotgun in their fifth floor apartment in the town of Aubagne. A spokesman said the woman was dazed when she contacted them, and did not appear to realise she had killed her son. The young man had been taking drugs for 14 years, and had demanded money from his mother for some time.

Floods cause havoc in California wine country

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — Parts of California's wine country were turned into huge lakes Monday as rivers swelled by three days of rain burst their banks, flooding dozens of houses and forcing hundreds of people to evacuate.

Scores of stranded residents in the Guerneville area north of San Francisco had to be flown to safety in military helicopters as the flood waters rose around their houses.

Governor Pete Wilson declared a state of emergency in four of the worst-hit northern California counties, enabling them to get state disaster assistance.

The storms claimed their first victim Monday when garbage truck driver Jimmy Ruiz Medrano, 25, was killed by an uprooted tree which fell on his truck in Carmel Valley, 100 miles (160 km) south of San Francisco, officials said.

The Monterey County Sheriff's Department said recent heavy rains apparently caused the tree's uprooting.

An estimated 500 to 1,000 people have been evacuated so far in northern California — and there may be more to come, said Kati Consant of the state office of emergency services.

"There's a good chance more areas will be flooded



Fortunado Hernandez (left) and his son Angel Hernandez's had to evacuate their home due to flooding as the weather service expects more heavy rains through the week (AFP photo).

and we'll have to evacuate," she said.

In Los Angeles, Mayor Richard Riordan declared a local state of emergency Monday in light of initial damage reports from recent storms and predictions of more to come.

"I am taking this precautionary measure to activate the city's emergency operations organisation," he said.

Heavy rains pounded northern California for a third day as a new Pacific storm reached land. Gale-force winds and rains knock-

ed out power to 40,000 homes in northern California and forecasters said stormy weather could continue until Friday.

Sonoma and Napa counties — the heart of California's wine industry — were among the areas worst affected.

The most serious flooding was around the picturesque Sonoma County town of Guerneville, 50 miles (80 km) north of San Francisco, where the Russian River reached 15 ft (five metres) above flood level at one stage Monday.

Local officials said the floods were the worst in the region in nine years, as bad as the disastrous floods of 1986.

In some areas, there was water as far as the eye could see, its surface broken only by the roofs of houses and the tops of trees. Dozens of houses were flooded, abandoned cars were filled with water and many roads were impassable.

Many vineyards were submerged, but since the vines are now dormant the damage may not be bad, local radio reports said.

He said he had no intention of calling general elections as he still had the support of Catalan allies in parliament and the real situation of the Spanish economy was one of steady improvement.

PP leader Jose Maria Aznar branded Mr. Gonzalez's interview as unconvincing and "pathetic," while the PP should call general elections by May at the latest when nationwide regional and municipal polls are scheduled.

"That is not the ideal moment — we think elections should be called immediately. But given that there already exists an electoral date in May, that is the latest possible moment."

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Addressing the nuclear threat

ALTHOUGH THE agenda of the U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry during his latest visit to Israel included the subject of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, there appears to be no breakthrough on this very controversial issue. Looming ominously in the horizon is the prospect of Iran acquiring or purchasing nuclear bombs and Israel's determination to strike at Tehran's nuclear facilities to forestall its acquisition of military nuclear capability. Israel's military strategists have long clung to the notion that given Israel's small size and small population, it will have to rely on mass destruction weapons to secure itself from military threats from its neighbours, which now include far-away countries as Iran and, perhaps, even Pakistan.

Against this backdrop, Egypt and other Arab countries that have the potential of developing or acquiring nuclear bombs have refused to ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) unless and until Israel does the same. Cairo has also refrained from becoming a party to the treaty outlawing the possession or development of other mass destruction weapons, like biological and chemical arsenals.

For Jordan, the situation is quite clear given the agreement between the Kingdom and Israel under the terms of their recently ratified peace treaty to work diligently for the purpose of securing a nuclear free Middle East. Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to devise a regionally acceptable formula to get rid of the threat of nuclear or other mass destruction weapons. There is an ongoing multilateral committee emanating from the peace process to accomplish exactly that objective. We subscribe to the proposition that there can be no genuine peace in the area as long as the security needs of all the countries in the region are not addressed. The way to attain this goal is to renounce the use of mass destruction weapons of all forms and to rely on a more sane policy to provide security for all the countries in this part of the world. This should entail Israel's ratification of the NPT with the Arab side ratifying the other treaties dealing with chemical and biological mass destruction weapons on a quid pro quo basis. In the final analysis, though, the real security for all the parties in the area is to attain a full and comprehensive peace and establish a genuine peace culture. Insecurity, after all, is deeply imbedded in the mind, and as long as there are mutual fears and anxieties, no amount of legal commitments to peace would do the necessary job.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

TAHER AL Adwan, a columnist in Al Ra'i daily, said Tuesday that the inclusion in the new government of 17 deputies means that Sharif Zeid would not find much difficulty in handling matters related to, or connected with, Parliament. The writer expected the new prime minister to be in harmony with Parliament since his colleagues in the government represent different parliamentary blocs, especially in matters related to the peace process, the fiscal budgets reconciliation. He said that the present government is also qualified to deal promptly with internal issues like unemployment and to stimulate the national economy since it groups qualified and capable members. In the writer's view, the government faces a major task of winning the confidence of the public and creating comfortable atmosphere that is more helpful towards creating new jobs, encouraging investment and spreading the spirit of optimism.

MAHMOUD RIMAWI criticised Israel for demanding that the Arabs reduce their forces and end their armament programmes while it continues to arm itself to the teeth with conventional as well as mass destruction weapons. The writer said in a column Tuesday that the Israelis have refused Egypt's call that it signs the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty but continues to accuse Iran of building nuclear weapons. While demanding that the Syrians reduce their armament and end Hizbollah's attacks on northern Israel, Tel Aviv is determined to hold on to the occupied Syrian heights and the Lebanese territories, added the writer. While issuing threats against Tehran for trying to possess nuclear arms, Israel is paving the ground for a strike against Iranian installations, something which could trigger a wide scale war in the region, said the writer.

Washington Watch

1995: So far, the year of Gingrich

By Dr. James Zoghy

DURING THE past six weeks, incoming Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich has dominated the U.S. media.

Like a disciplined field marshal executing his battle plan, Mr. Gingrich has seized the initiative on every front. He has restructured Congress, named new committee chairmen, defined and prioritised the issues and set the agenda the first day and the first three months of the new Congress.

It is interesting to note that throughout this massive undertaking, Mr. Gingrich has faced little internal opposition to his mandate to direct the new Republican majority in Congress. That Mr. Gingrich is far from being the most senior Republican in the Congress has never seemed to matter. And while the Republican Party is not unified, Mr. Gingrich's brand of confrontational conservatism is now the dominant trend in the Congress (especially among the large group of newly elected Republicans); and so far now Mr. Gingrich's control is uncontested.

What is equally interesting is that despite Mr. Gingrich's success in defining a national agenda and displaying a real leadership in taking control of Congress, his personal standing among the public and the press is quite low.

Immediately after the election, while the Speaker-to-be was still riding high on positive press coverage, one national columnist warned that the very media that was elevating Mr. Gingrich would soon turn against him (as it has in the case of most recent major political leaders).

When that change did occur, the columnist warned, Mr. Gingrich would sink in popularity and lose his grip on the national debate.

To some extent, that change has taken place: a number of critical articles and exposes have appeared which treat the Republican leader to harsh and unfattering commentary — but he has been unfazed by the attacks.

It is fascinating in this context to watch a Gingrich encounter with the press. He defines the agenda. As the press "picks" (like a pack of wolves) inundates him with questions about his agenda, he simply turns them away.

The Gingrich ground rules seem to be: he'll only answer the questions he wants to answer and discuss only the topics he has come before the press to discuss. And the Speaker has not hesitated to scold the press publicly for what he has described as their unfair effort to define issues themselves and not accept the definitions given to events and issues by political leaders.

For example, after emerging from the White House last week after what both Mr. Gingrich and President Bill Clinton described as a "positive" and "cooperative" exchange of views, the media pressed the Speaker to discuss the differences that divided the White House and the Republican Congress. Instead of accepting this "bait," Mr. Gingrich rebuked the assembled press for ignoring the description of the meeting as "cooperative." His firm rebuke apparently worked, since it forestalled further questions on that subject.

Mr. Gingrich's approach seems to be based on a recognition that his power is derived from his party's victory in the elections, his ability to lead Congress and set the daily legislative agenda. He understands that his personal public standing and his relationship with the press will, over the long term, be determined by his ability to win legislative battles and to continue to define the agenda, and not the other way around.

It is this self-confidence that contributes to Mr. Gingrich's leadership ability. He has been planning this Republican takeover for over 20 years. While other Republicans were content with their minority status, Mr. Gingrich planned an issue-oriented campaign to achieve a Republican majority. His lecturing across the country, his video tapes, his political fundraising and his political interven-

tions have helped in the victorious campaigns of many of the new members of the Congress not only in this past year but in several previous election cycles — so much so that many of these Republicans are known as "Gingrich clones."

And while I personally feel that much of the Gingrich message and many of the items on the Mr. Gingrich agenda are wrong-headed and, if implemented, would lead the U.S. down the wrong path — his is the only clear, coherent and self-confident programme that has been offered to American voters in the past decade.

In a nutshell, the conservative view of Mr. Gingrich is that government has become intrusive and a burden. He calls for a taxpayer rebellion that will limit the role of government in people's lives. Ignoring the essential role that government has been called on to play in ending racism, the effects of racism, in meeting the crisis of urban decay and enduring poverty — Mr. Gingrich and his movement have attracted the support of angry white, principally male voters who feel paradoxically both threatened and ignored by the social programmes of the past three decades.

By saying "the liberal press be damned," Mr. Gingrich appears to be saying, "we have the voters, we control Congress — that's the source of power." And it is this self-assurance and the simplicity of his message that has carried the national debate.

In comparison with the performance of the White House during the same six week period, Mr. Gingrich appeared as the model of principled leadership that inspires confidence in others.

The president faces a more difficult set of circumstances than the Speaker. He leads a party that is in disarray, shell-shocked by its November defeat, and a party that is none too hesitant to publicly criticize its leader.

From the beginning, Mr. Clinton had a difficult time winning Democratic support for his agenda. His first legislative effort — the Economic Stimulus package of 1993 — was defeated despite a Democratic majority in Congress. Even the president's later victories, on the Budget and Deficit Reduction Bill and the Crime Bill of 1994, were so diluted by compromises (made to win reluctant Democratic votes) that his leadership was always in question. Mr. Clinton's health care and campaign reform proposals never really stood a chance for the same reason: the failure of Democrats to support their leadership.

Today, the same Democratic Party that feuded between its liberal and moderate wings over who was responsible for Mr. Clinton's victory in 1992 — which was really a debate over which direction the party should go in Mr. Clinton's first two years in office — is once again engaged in a vitriolic debate over which wing of the party is responsible for the losses of 1994.

Party moderates, headed by the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), claim that the losses came because the president and his party have been too liberal and, therefore, lost white male support and with it the 1994 elections. Liberals, headed by the liberal congressional leadership and the more liberal National Rainbow Coalition of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, counter that Democrats lost because the party abandoned its traditional bases of African-American and unions.

The liberal wing of the party makes a better case. In fact, most of the Democrats' congressional losses in 1994 were experienced by moderate DLC members. And in elections, such as the victory of Senator Chuck Robb in Virginia and Senator Dianne Feinstein in California, it was the black, Hispanic and "liberal" votes that were decisive.

There is a real debate over the changes that are taking place in U.S. society. Changes in technology and employ-

ment patterns (that have resulted in factories closing and making obsolete several formerly productive sectors of the economy), changes in population patterns (white Americans leaving the nation's cities and moving to the South and West or the farther suburbs), and the instability in the world resulting from the end of the cold war, and the changes in social mores — all of these have combined to produce anger and alienation and a volatility in the voting public.

It was reaction to these changes that brought Ross Perot to prominence. It was Bill Clinton's message of hope that responded to this voter insecurity that brought him victory in 1992. And it was Newt Gingrich's message of frustration with the failure of government that helped bring about the Republican sweep in 1994. While Republicans have found a coherent message in the Gingrich "Contract with America," Democrats are still debating how to respond and how to redirect their message to win back voter support.

And within this debate lies part of the president's dilemma: He leads a party of at least two, and at times innumerable, wings, with each wing competing for both loyalty and attention and neither willing to compromise or even silence its public criticism of the other. In a real sense, the Democratic majority in Congress during the past two years wasn't a majority at all.

The same lack of unity plagues the Republican Party at times, but not within its congressional delegation. The divisions that exist among Republicans will not become a factor in the national debate until the 1996 presidential campaign starts to heat up later this year. It will be then that the party's moderate and conservative wings will clash. For the time being, however, the path is clear for speaker Gingrich to lead his Republican revolution in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Gingrich will succeed in passing much of the promised "Contract with America." This "contract" is a reshuffle of Reagan Republican doctrine: tax cuts, "trickle-down economics" (tax breaks for wealthy Americans and large corporations in hope that the resultant benefits will "trickle down" into the economy to create economic growth and jobs), increased defence spending, punishment-centred anti-crime legislation, and severe cuts in a wide range of social programmes.

While it is expected that the "contract" will pass in the Gingrich-led Congress, its fate is not so certain in the more moderate and deliberative Senate. Already, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole has expressed reservations concerning both the "contract" and Speaker Gingrich's confrontational style of conservatism.

Some Democrats, and even the president himself, have now come out in favour of some aspects of the "contract," though they are trying to frame it in terms more acceptable to Democrats. For example, they are promising tax breaks for "middle class" Americans, those earning under \$75,000 a year — while the Republican "contract" defines "middle class" as those earning under \$200,000 a year.

For now, it appears that Mr. Gingrich has no plans to delay or compromise on his agenda; and it will, most probably, pass unimpeded through 1995. He will pass most of his programme, though it may never become law. The Senate will modify or block much of the House Speaker's effort, and the president will veto parts that he finds objectionable.

Until these obstacles emerge, however, Mr. Gingrich will lead. How the Speaker will react to challenges to his programme remains to be seen. But it is clear that his bold challenge to the president and his control of the national debate will be one of the defining characteristics of 1995 and will help to set the issues debate for the 1996 elections.



Rabin on ropes at mid-term

By Robert Mahoney

Reuters

TEL AVIV — Halfway through a term in which he has won a Nobel Peace Prize and shaken the hands of more former Arab enemies than any previous Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin is on the ropes.

If elections were held today, Mr. Rabin's Labour Party would be trounced.

Mr. Rabin's opinion poll ratings have dipped below those of opposition Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu, who is better known among Israelis for his mastery of the television "sound bite" than for coherent alternatives to Labour's peace plans.

Disappointment about the slow pace of peace with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), continuing Islamic militant attacks in the streets of Israel, rising inflation and taxes, a tax on stock market profits and a public perception of an administration stuck in the mid-term doldrums, have sapped support.

Internally, Mr. Rabin's Labour Party is in ferment as the young guard jostle to succeed the 72-year-old former general.

Externally, the paper over the cracks in his coalition government with left-

wing parties is beginning to peel thanks to what they call an ambivalent policy over Jewish settlement of the occupied West Bank.

The liberal Israeli press has also started to turn on the man they once portrayed as the only one tough enough on security to be trusted to negotiate the transfer of the West Bank and Gaza to PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Former virtues are now vices. Toughness is seen as masking brittleness. Haaretz newspaper, bastion of the liberal left, has carried pieces accusing him of being isolated and tired, surrounded by bad advisers, and not delegating enough.

"We are in trouble," said one Labour Party and government member who asked not to be identified. "We are even making Bibi (Netanyahu) look good. All he has to do is keep quiet."

"The old stories that Rabin cannot make a decision, that he wavers under pressure, that he cannot delegate power, all these are coming out again. We have to counter them," the source said.

Labour's narrow 1992 election victory was pinned on the personality of Mr. Rabin, a no-nonsense native "abra" who, because he captured the West Bank,

Gaza and the Golan Heights as army commander in 1967, could be entrusted with negotiating their future.

Reports by historians that he almost cracked under pressure in 1967 and the political scandals and charges of incompetence that brought down his only previous administration in 1977 were swept under the carpet in 1992.

Mr. Rabin, bolstered by the politically wily Shimon Peres, swept away a Likud Party fattened by 15 years in power and took Israel into talks with the once-outlawed PLO on a water-tight parliamentary majority. Any doubts about his personal competence to lead will be crucial for the next election, due by November 1996, when for the first time the prime minister will be elected directly, rather like an executive president.

"Even without the polls the situation is very shaky," said Hebrew University political science professor Abraham Diskin. "The starting point for Labour is that in the last election most people voted for right-wing parties. It is only because of 'surplus votes' (one of the mechanisms of Israel's proportional representation system) that the left wing got in," Mr. Diskin said.

Likud voters who swung to Labour as well as many right-wing Labour voters are disillusioned with the peace process. Israel's own sense of personal security has also been undermined by mounting Islamic suicide attacks such as the Tel Aviv bus bomb which killed 22 people and the bomber in October.

"Expectations that the peace process was going to end our troubles were too high," Mr. Diskin said.

The bombings and shootings coupled with polls week after week showing Labour dropping from 44 to about 37 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, put Mr. Rabin in a dilemma.

Should he accelerate the implementation of Palestinian self-rule and talks with Syria in the hope of solid progress by 1996 or slow the transfer of authority assuring Israelis that Palestinians will control the West Bank only once they have improved their security record.

Some political commentators believe Mr. Rabin still has time to pull political and economic rabbits out of the hat for 1996.

"We have still almost two years to go," said Foreign Minister Peres, one man who could yet save or sink Mr. Rabin. "It is a long time in politics."

LETTERS

Road safety — issues to be tackled

To the Editor:

I READ, with great interest, the remarks made by His Majesty King Hussein on the appalling conditions of the roads in our country (Jordan Times, Dec. 27). It is truly regrettable that the King, with all his duties and pressing demands on his time, has to remind us of this important issue. As an ordinary citizen, I would like to suggest the following measures with a view to improving and upgrading the standard of road safety in this country:

— The highway code must be strictly enforced and applied across the board to all drivers and vehicles with no exceptions (i.e. army, government).

— The concerned authorities need to review the existing procedure for obtaining a driver licence, particularly for drivers of public vehicles: taxis, buses, shared taxis etc.

— A procedure to evaluate each driver on a points/endorsement system should be adopted — this is already common practice in many countries. This system should deal promptly and effectively with violations of traffic regulations, such as going through a red light, speeding in residential areas and failing to indicate when required. If a driver accumulates X points over Y period, then his/her driving licence should be suspended for one year.

— Public awareness is the most important issue and it should start at home, where we, as parents, should educate our children about road safety. This work needs to be reinforced at school, and no child should be frightened to tell the bus/taxi driver to slow down.

— There should be stiffer penalties in force for those drivers who cause injury to other people and/or property, due to reckless driving.

I drive across Amman every day and what worries me most are the new 26-passenger type buses which race to get past each other. How can they get away with it? There should be far stricter vigilance of speeding bus drivers, as they are not only putting their own lives at risk, but also those of their passengers. We have already witnessed two fatal bus accidents in the course of a few months last year, both causing great loss of life.

Let us all hope that 1995 will herald in a new era of road safety awareness, with the concerned authorities and the general public working together to improve the standard of driving on our roads. Only then will the tragic loss of life, caused by irresponsible driving, become a less prominent feature in our daily newspaper.

Sameer Haddad,
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Features

The third lane

By Ica Wabbeh

A CLUB, called the third lane, should be established in Jordan. Its members would be exclusively those car drivers who prefer to use the lane on the right of wide roads or highways, which is usually the band reserved for relatively slow-moving vehicles everywhere in the world. The proposed club should not concern itself with the use of single-lane roads. That should be left entirely to the Traffic Department and everyday drivers to deal with. The new club members' only concern should be how to whizz along their favourite third lane, where it exists, unperturbed by the snails on the left who, at 40 km/hour, think they are at the races.

So, followers of the new entity could rally around a manifest demanding the mayor to pay extra special care to the right lane which is also the most dilapidated. Besides the patchwork of tar-scars left behind from repeated excavations to lay telephone, electricity, water, maintenance lines — the lane is also used by pedestrians — whose walking pattern, if seen from above, would look like that of an enervated person due to the uninspired placement of trees on the side walk.

Now, if the club would come into being, with proper lobbying and financing, its members could really thrive and reach their destination faster than anybody else.

Just imagine! You tail the

car in front. You politely wait for the driver to realise that you need to overtake, but he/she, oblivious to the outside world, stubbornly and purposefully continues the itinerary with the desperation of someone who fears the road would be taken from under the car's wheels if it veers one inch. Then, perhaps, depending on the habit, you might blow your car's horn or flash its headlights. Usually these tricks do not help. So what do you do? Obviously resort to the "third lane."

It sounds ideal, smooth and easy. And it usually is. Just watch the traffic flow. The right lane is, as a rule, free of traffic, meaning car traffic. It could easily be converted into a cart, bicycle or donkey lane, as things stand now.

Not that we do not sympathise with the plight of a right-lane driver in times of rain, snow or construction activity when the manholes overflow, the lane becomes a tricky rapid, the engine can stall or the sand could make the car overturn in no time.

But normally, and after the club is founded and repair works are done to perfection, the lane is the best thing that could happen to any driver.

Of course the Traffic Department will have to closely cooperate with its members and amend some of its regulations, but that will be worth the effort.

The writer is a member of the Jordan Times' editorial staff.

War coverage under Russian fire

Reporters are trapped in a minefield of state censorship, writes Sophia Kishkovsky

WHEN RUSSIAN forces carried out their most intense daytime bombing raid on the Chechen capital last month, the Russian state television correspondent Mikhail Zotov reported on the grim tableau of burning vehicles and blackened corpses.

Although he was asked to transmit this material to Moscow by 7:15 p.m., Zotov said he stalled until the beginning of his network's 9 p.m. news broadcast to slip it past the editors, who have the responsibility of protecting the government's interests. "If we had sent it earlier, it never would have been shown," he said.

Russian journalists covering the war between Russia and Chechnya find themselves fighting a government campaign against the press that harks back to the days of Soviet rule. Zotov and others face a daily flood of disinformation, attempts at censorship, and threats to end the media's hard-fought independence.

State-run news agencies were told last week that they were "obliged to provide the official point of view of the government" in addition to other sources, while the Interior Ministry accused journalists of slandering servicemen and endangering their lives by publishing secret information about the Chechen conflict.

In a televised speech recently, President Boris Yeltsin made the unsubstantiated charge that "Chechen money" was behind some mass media in Russia. Despite requests from Russian journalists, Mr. Yeltsin's office has refused to release any evidence to support his charge.

Russian troops posted in Chechnya have greeted some correspondents by firing at their cars or over their heads. On Thursday,

while the defence minister, Pavel Grachev, was promising that journalists would now be welcome to visit military units in the field, a correspondent with the Russian television news programme Vesti reported that he was shot at by Russian troops.

"The behaviour of bureaucrats in regard to the mass media has been horrible," said Otto Latsis, a veteran political commentator for Izvestia, one of Russia's most influential national newspapers. "They're not only threatening to take their money and licences, but they're not providing any information. Instead, they tell lies."

Izvestia has led the print media by covering Russian involvement in Chechnya when it was a covert intelligence operation. But television has been the most daring in its coverage. The Independent Television Network, or NTV, has brought the war into Russians' homes. Its footage of homed-out Grozny, anguished civilians and hapless soldiers has angered the government, which threatened to revoke NTV's licence.

News broadcasts on Ostankino, the larger of the two state TV channels, have become a litany of official propaganda. Viewers are assured that the "bandit formations" in Chechnya are being liquidated and "constitutional order" is being restored to the relief of "grateful" Chechens. Programmes have portrayed Chechens as ruthless criminals.

"Of course they check the programmes — they have censorship here," said Zotov, who recalled that some of his most graphic footage had ended up on the cutting room floor.

"I assure you that there is no pressure put on correspondents. But one of our principles is, don't make things worse," said Viktor Kuznetsov, the deputy director of the Ostankino news division. "We don't show the most frightening things which our correspondents see — corpses and



A Chechen fighter in the presidential palace watches troops outside climb aboard a captured Russian armoured personnel carrier

pondents. But one of our principles is, don't make things worse," said Viktor Kuznetsov, the deputy director of the Ostankino news division. "We don't show the most frightening things which our correspondents see — corpses and

warned that democratic gains were being eroded. "Events (in eastern Europe) in 1989 gave rise to the name 'velvet revolution'," said Yakovlev, who was fired as Ostankino chief by Mr. Yeltsin last year for "had political leadership."

"This is a velvet dictatorship, because we're allowed to talk about freedom of speech and human rights. But a velvet dictatorship can't last forever. Something has to happen."

Newsday.

Israel-PLO talks in 'crisis'

(Continued from page 1)

ing to grant residents of East Jerusalem the right to vote and reject our proposal for a 100-member council. They want a smaller number, but they haven't suggested a figure," Dr. Erakat said.

Dr. Erakat said the Palestinian delegation handed the Israelis a document calling for an election, monitoring committee consisting of four judges from Egypt, the United States, Russia and the European Union.

Israel has insisted on joint Israeli-Palestinian monitoring of the elections.

Dr. Erakat, who is also Palestinian local government minister, said the two sides no longer disagreed over the participation of Palestinian opposition groups in the elections.

"It is a Palestinian affair and we are not supposed to discuss it with Israel," adding that "all Palestinians aged over 18 may take part in the elections."

Since talks on holding elections began in October the Israelis have been calling for Palestinian groups opposed to the peace process and which call for the destruction of Israel to be barred from the poll.

Israel and the Palestinians are also at odds over the release of Palestinian prisoners and the linkage between the long-delayed Palestinian elections and the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank.

Israel radio said Tuesday Mr. Rabin will for the first time propose an Israeli army redeployment on the West Bank next week.

Mr. Rabin would show Mr. Arafat a map of a planned pull-back from Palestinian towns to allow for elections to be held for an autonomy council, the radio said, quoting a senior official.

However, the report gave no details of the scale or timetable for the redeployment.

ment which was supposed to have taken place before July 13 under the 1993 declaration of principles for self-rule.

The Haaretz newspaper said the plan would be for a staged redeployment.

The army would leave Bethlehem, Jenin and a third unnamed town but would maintain a presence in other built-up areas where joint patrols would be mounted with the Palestinian police.

"A specific answer will have to be found for each West Bank town," the daily said.

Under the proposal, the army would however remain in control of Hebron, where several hundred Jewish settlers live right in the middle of 120,000 Palestinians.

Police commander of the West Bank Eli Ron revealed Tuesday that the force was readying to adjust its deployment in the territory according to the army pull-back.

Mr. Rabin in December offered a temporary redeployment, with troops returning to the towns after the ballot. The Palestinians rejected the proposal.

The Jerusalem Post reported that a basic understanding had been reached on the principle that the army will not redeploy outside all Palestinian areas.

But differences remained over the precise areas, the daily said.

"In the end it will all boil down to specific pieces of geography," a senior official said.

"Arafat has come around to accept that Israel will not redeploy everywhere," he said.

"But the difference between him and Rabin is this — Arafat says redeployment should occur everywhere, except in specific problematic areas. Rabin says the reverse — redeployment should not occur except in listed areas of agreement."

Chechens marshal forces

(Continued from page 1)

Viktor Chernomyrdin met members of the local Chechen community to discuss the conflict. He said in a statement that a peaceful solution had to be found during the ceasefire period.

Mr. Chernomyrdin was charged by President Boris Yeltsin last week to explore talks to end the Chechen conflict, but on condition that Chechnya end its three-year secession from Russia which sparked the conflict.

But Oleg Lobov, secretary of the Russian security council which is masterminding the Russian strategy in Chechnya, warned that the "disarming" of the Chechen rebels would have to continue after the ceasefire.

Both Mr. Chernomyrdin and Mr. Lobov denied criticism that the ceasefire was in fact an ultimatum to the Chechen rebels to surrender because, they said, the Chechens were being offered an amnesty.

Meanwhile, the Russian Duma (lower house of parliament) was due to hold an extraordinary session on Wednesday to debate the Chechen crisis for the first time this year.

Among the motions on the agenda was one to ban military intervention in Chechnya, and another to give the parliament more influence over the executive.

Africa needs rich nations help on Rwanda plan

By Buchizya Mseteka
Reuters

NAIROBI — A Rwanda crisis plan devised by regional African leaders needs the support of rich nations if it is to succeed, diplomats and analysts said. A summit meeting of leaders of seven African states — Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zaire and Zambia — have agreed the plan in the wake of Rwandan genocide and the exodus of more than two million refugees.

The leaders, chaired by Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, agreed that suspected perpetrators of last year's genocide must be separated from innocent refugees in camps in Zaire and Tanzania if there is to be peace in Rwanda.

They also agreed that safe corridors from the refugee camps to the Rwanda border and safe transit points inside Rwanda must be set up to enable the refugees to return home.

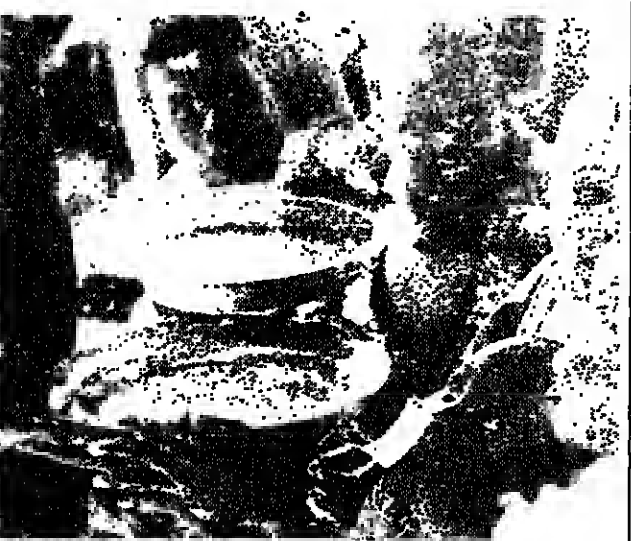
Political analysts said that the formula would mean little unless it was backed by an international peacekeeping force with real muscle.

Regional observers said none of the seven African states is able to provide such a force. They poured scorn on an offer by Zaire to provide 2,500 troops to do the job.

"That is tantamount to internationalising thuggery. Zaire has Africa's, if not the world's, most undisciplined, chaotic and corrupt army. How could it be trusted to do the job?" a Western diplomat told Reuters.

The observers also said such a force would be vastly outnumbered by the 30,000 troops and 10,000 militia loyal to Rwanda's defeated Hutu government who control the main refugee camps in Zaire.

"You need a reputable international force, a well-financed force, a force with real teeth to back the kind



A member of the International Red Cross gives some food to Rwandan children in a refugee camp in Mogadishu (AFP photo)

of formula the leaders agreed upon," a European diplomat added.

A recent United Nations plan to raise an international force to enforce order in the teeming camps appears to have died because of a shortage of funds and of volunteer contingents.

But Zaire's Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo was emphatic his country's army would be able to do the job and allow Rwandan refugees to return home.

"We shall start the job of detecting those who intimidate, those who exert pressures and exactions and believe me this organisation will allow us to uncover them and render them harmless," he told Reuters in an interview.

Diplomats also said it was necessary for the new Rwandan government, set up by a Tutsi-dominated army, to create conditions of peace and reconciliation inside the country in order to persuade the suspicious Hutu refugees to go back home.

"Much can be done for Rwanda — but without reconciliation between the (majority) Hutus and (minority) Tutsis, such efforts would be a complete

waste of time," an Ugandan government official at the talks said.

He added: "It is an illusion for one group to think it can rule without the other group. The two must come together — only then shall we see lasting peace in that country."

Rwandans speak the same language and share the same names and religion. Yet for decades an obsession with ethnicity has frequently boiled over into massacres by the two groups.

Analysts also pointed to the absence from the summit of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and raised doubts about any implementation of the plan without his endorsement.

Zairean officials gave conflicting explanations for Mr. Mobutu's absence. Some said he was mourning a dead nephew but Mr. Kengo told Reuters he was playing host to Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos at his jungle palace.

Mr. Mobutu's full backing is needed to bring the refugee camps in eastern Zaire under control and stop cross-border attacks into Rwanda.

Egyptian bureaucrats have ways to make you wait

By Samial Nakhoul
Reuters

CAIRO — At one counter a woman was filing her nails, another sat behind a rickety desk fixing her makeup and combing her hair, others just gossiped or read newspapers.

In mid-morning the staff gathered in a corner to eat falafel sandwiches and drink their tea. At Muslim prayer time, twice a day during working hours, they went to pray, leaving hundreds of people unattended.

This was not a beauteous parlour or a cafe but the living embodiment of Egyptian bureaucracy, a staid, concrete block in central Cairo known simply as al-mogammaa — the complex.

Here civil servants, in a style stretching far back to the Ottoman and maybe the Pharaonic past, have perfected the art of making the possible impossible for the general public.

Here Egyptians and foreigners wait in the semblance of a queue for hours to obtain a document or have one signed.

Often, when their turn comes, the civil servants divert them to another counter, or turn aside to deal with something else, or demand that extra elusive document the applicant does not have, did not think of or was not told about.

Applications are put away without any filing and are often lost. It is the norm to fill out the same papers twice or more.

The well-off can spare themselves the hassle by sending messengers with a baksheesh (tip) for those in charge. Those in the queues are mostly the poor and the desperate.

Some of the civil servants apparently do not work at all, sitting at empty desks all day, while a small minority fend off the clamouring crowds. Unofficial estimates say the average

Egyptian bureaucrat does 27 minutes of real work a day.

"Public sector employees just clock in and clock out. Thousands wait behind doors until the clock strikes 3 p.m. to leave. Hundreds are hired to make tea and do nothing else," said a foreign official who works in the bureaucracy.

"There is no real accountability. Ninety-five per cent of the employees find a way of doing nothing," he said.

Antiquated manual methods do not make their task easier or more efficient. Without computers, the civil servants copy out by hand every detail from passports and other forms.

Heaps of application papers pile up next to yellowing registration files, all dumped on old desks, squeezed onto dusty shelves or crammed higgledy-piggledy into drawers.

"It's pure bedlam," said Hani Hassanein, looking around him. "They drive us crazy until we get our papers done. They make us suffer. They send us from one counter to another... go here, go there, come back tomorrow, next week... see the officer."

"They give us hell. Each day we spend here is like a year. They are spongers and parasites, they are lazy and incompetent. They can never do things on the spot. They make you come and go until they exhaust you," said Samira Hammouda.

Etaf Shehata, a 30-year-old Palestinian teacher with a relatively simple transaction to accomplish, knew her story by heart well before she came even close to success.

"My brother and two sisters have their residence permits registered on my mother's passport but when my mother got a new passport the officer who did it did not transfer them. He dropped them. So we need to register them on my

mother's new passport. This is the old passport, please make it like this.

"Please, please, for God's sake I've been coming here and waiting for weeks like this. I've been here all day."

"Well, you will be spending another week like this," answered the man behind the counter. "So what do you want exactly? Don't speak so fast and tell me the problem again."

And off he sent her to another counter.

Four hours later, after many parroted explanations, several setbacks and two visits to the section head, there were signs of relief all round and the teacher rushed to pay and get out.

"We're closed for today," said the cashier. "Come back tomorrow. We don't accept applications or cheques after 12." He ignored her argument that it was two hours to closing time.

The complex may be the pinnacle of Egyptian bureaucracy but the picture is much the same throughout the plethora of government departments and huge state-owned enterprises.

In decrepit offices, underemployed workers sit on top of each other. In some cases 30 people are hired to perform a task that only five could do.

Graduates wait for years for the low-paid jobs the government guarantees them. The government says it has to keep on unnecessary workers and hire new young ones, or risk public discontent.

"Bureaucracy in Egypt is a social welfare net. People within the bureaucracy do absolutely nothing," said a foreign official.

"Nobody wants to rock the boat, but you have to take risks to end bureaucracy. What is true in Egyptian bureaucracy is that some traits of bureaucracy worldwide are taken to extremes."

Actual foreign investment in China soars, contracts fall

BEIJING (AFP) — Actual foreign investment in China soared 38 per cent in 1994 over the previous year to \$27.7 billion, a report said Sunday, revealing that the value of new contracts had however fallen sharply.

Contracts signed last year were worth \$68.1 billion, Xinhua quoted ministry of foreign trade and economic cooperation official Liu Zhiren as saying, acknowledging a fall over 1993 but giving no precise figure.

Contracts worth more than \$100 billion were signed that year.

The official was nevertheless upbeat about the results, pointing to an improvement in the quality of new projects.

Most of the 41,000 items approved last year were large industrial projects, particularly focusing on energy, transport and other infrastructure facilities, while speculation in real estate was "basically curbed," Mr. Liu was quoted as saying.

While the success of Chinese efforts to shift the focus on investment has played a part in the falling value of contracts since the first quarter, foreign economists say the trend also reflects the credit crunch here and a waning of the China investment euphoria of recent years.

Investors are now becoming more aware of the obstacles to doing business here and reassessing their estimates of the Asian giant's potential.

Chinese officials have said the fall has also resulted from moves to clamp down on "false foreign deals" — Chinese companies that set up abroad in order to reinvest here and enjoy preferential policies reserved for foreign-funded projects.

Meanwhile, China is to expand its network of state-level economic zones, with inland provincial capitals to

join 32 cities in coastal areas that have set up such foreign investment havens, a report has said.

The director of the Office for Special Economic Zones, Hu Ping, said all inland capitals would be permitted to set up state-level Economic and Technical Development Zones (ETDZs) as long as their prospects for attracting foreign investment looked good, the China Daily Business Weekly reported.

The existing zones have absorbed \$7.5 billion from abroad since the establishment of the first ones 10 years ago, the newspaper said, adding they contributed 5.3 billion yuan (\$616 million) to state coffers in 1994 while receiving only 2.2 billion yuan in low-interest state loans.

If provincial-level ETDZs are included, such zones account for 20 per cent of the \$80 billion of foreign funds that have come to China since the country launched its economic reforms in 1979, it said.

The report did not include figures for the five coastal Special Economic Zones that were China's earliest show-cases for economic reform, offering — like the ETDZs — preferential treatment to foreign investors.

Foreign experts have criticised China's zone policy, saying the focus on coastal regions has helped areas which already have natural locational advantages and have far less need of special incentives to attract foreigners than inland provinces.

While planning to boost the number of state-level ETDZs, China has moved in the past year to restore order and save much-needed agricultural land by abolishing many illegitimate zones, many set up by farmers hoping to attract investment to their villages.

Japan, U.S. reach financial services agreement

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan and the United States reached an agreement on financial services Tuesday as Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama prepared for talks in Washington with President Bill Clinton.

The agreement, announced by Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura in Beijing, requires Japan to liberalise pension funds, investment trusts, cross-border financial transactions and securities activities, the finance ministry said.

The accord, part of a bilateral economic framework drawn up in the middle of 1993, also requires the United States to improve the environment for foreign banks and securities companies. Mutual measures are also included.

"The agreement is very significant not only for Japan-U.S. economic relations but

also for the liberalisation of international financial transactions," Mr. Takemura said in a statement released by the ministry.

"It is very significant for the two countries," he added. The accord followed a telephone call Tuesday between Mr. Takemura, currently visiting China, and the acting head of the U.S. Treasury, Frank Newman. "I am very pleased that the final agreement could be reached now," Mr. Takemura said.

"Japan is actively proceeding with the deregulation of the overall economy and we will steadily and sincerely implement the latest decision," he added.

The announcement came only hours after Mr. Murayama left for Washington on his first visit to the United States since assuming office in June last year. Under the agreement,

Japanese public pension funds are to be opened to investment advisory companies as early as April, the finance ministry said.

The ministry also said that investment advisory companies would be allowed to deal with national mutual funds and a mutual fund operated by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. (NTT) during the fiscal year starting in April.

Japanese trust banks and insurance companies are currently the only financial institutions allowed to manage public pension and mutual funds.

Among other measures to be taken by Japan, the minimum capital requirement for investment trusts of 300 million yen (\$3 million) will be removed and replaced with a minimum net asset requirement of 50 million yen.

Japan is also required to clarify procedures used to define what securities actually are as well as simplifying cross-border financial transactions, especially in the area of Eurobond issues and offerings of samurai bonds.

The United States is required to improve its treatment of foreign banks and securities companies operating on its territory and assure that foreign banks are given national treatment, the ministry said.

The mutual measures call for both countries to maintain transparency in administrative procedures, strengthen the application of anti-monopoly laws in the area of financial services and avoid the use of numerical targets.

"The two countries will use objective criteria and not numerical targets to assess the implementation of the

measures," the ministry said. Japan has frequently balked at the idea of using numerical trade targets, leading to the collapse of the framework negotiations in February last year during a visit to Washington by then prime minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

The financial services agreement virtually ensures that the summit between Mr. Murayama and Mr. Clinton Wednesday will be free of the usual bickering over trade, leaving the two leaders to concentrate on other aspects of the relationship.

Japan and the United States have already announced plans to revive stalled talks on automotive trade this month and expect to reach an accord on Japanese government purchases of foreign computers some time this week.

Bank of Spain intervenes to support the peseta

LONDON (AFP) — The Bank of Spain intervened to support the peseta at about 87.90 pesetas to the mark after it had fallen to an historic low point of 86 pesetas in a climate of panic, dealers said here Tuesday.

The intervention, which consisted of selling marks for pesetas, then pushed the Spanish currency back up to about 87.10 pesetas to the mark. The peseta was being traded at 86.52 at the close in London on Monday.

The peseta has declined sharply since Wednesday when an interest rate increase by the Bank of Spain was badly received by the market.

"People are panicking about the peseta," said Peter Wood, a dealer at the Bank of Boston.

"There are rumours of Spain pulling the peseta out of the exchange rate mechanism (ERM), but I can't really see why they would do that as it is still well within its ERM fluctuation bands," he added.

Since the reform of the European monetary system (EMS) in August 1993, the peseta, in common with the other European currencies within the ERM, has a 15-per cent fluctuation limit. It is allowed to fall to 91.91 against the mark.

The currency is falling victim to political tension in Spain where Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez failed to reassure investors Monday evening when he denied government involvement in the right-wing GAL and terrorist group, which operated against ETA in the 1980s.

Dealers said resignation by Mr. Gonzalez would have been welcomed by financial markets because it would have ended political uncertainty.

At Midland Global Markets, analyst Ken Watter said that there was likely instead to be "a period of protracted political uncertainty," something which financial markets were unlikely to take well.

Jobless to be Russia's biggest problem, minister says

MOSCOW (R) — Unemployment in Russia is more than three times the official figure and will soon be the country's greatest social problem, Labour and Employment Minister Gennady Melnikyan told ITAR-TASS news agency.

Around 1.5 million people in Russia are officially registered as unemployed, but Mr. Melnikyan said the real figure was around 5.1 million.

If one added the 4.8 million people on unpaid leave or part-time work the figure rose to almost 10 million people — or 13 per cent of the

workforce — which was an indication of what was to come, he said.

"The minister is worried about the excessively quick rate at which hidden unemployment is becoming real. He thinks this could lead to a sharp increase in social tension and confrontation," TASS said.

Top officials, fearing a possible social explosion, have frequently given gloomy forecasts of joblessness. They say closing factories pushes unemployment up and triggers social unrest in regions dependent on a single employer.

The official forecast that, once bankruptcy laws start to bite, hundreds of thousands of people working in inefficient plants and enterprises will lose their jobs.

Mr. Melnikyan said a whole series of measures had to be taken to deal with the rise in joblessness. Unemployment benefits had to be boosted and the federal employment service should step up its re-training programmes.

Meanwhile, Russia had a trade surplus of \$20 billion last year from a surplus of \$15.6 billion in 1993, the Russian external economic relations ministry estimated.

Sweden introduces belt-tightening budget

STOCKHOLM (R) — Sweden introduced a belt-tightening budget Tuesday with the first major cuts to the country's famous welfare state to try to tame a fast-growing state deficit and debt.

Finance Minister Goran Persson, unveiling his first budget since a Social Democratic government took office in September, announced cuts to child benefits and unemployment allowances and in virtually every area of government spending.

The biggest savings would come from the social affairs ministry — \$4.4 billion (\$1.1 billion) by 1998 — but even the Swedish king will have to save as the royal

family's allowance is reduced.

"We now have a unique chance of using an economic upswing to stabilise central government debt and thereby bring Sweden into a good economic path," Mr. Persson said.

"If this opportunity is not taken now, when the next slowdown comes we risk being forced into very painful changes in the Swedish welfare state," he added.

Mr. Persson unveiled 21.7 billion crowns (\$2.9 billion) in spending cuts in the budget. A mixture of spending cuts and increased taxes would raise 114.2 billion crowns (\$15.2 billion) by

1998, reducing the state's financial deficit to seven per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) from 13 per cent today.

Economists however said the budget was too little too late.

Sweden has been left with a huge mountain of debt of around 1.3 trillion crowns (\$173 billion) after pumping large amounts of money into the welfare state in the 1970s and 80s.

"The budget is as good as anyone could expect. There are no tax increases. Persson has delivered what he promised in full," said Keld Holm, economist in Lehman Brothers in London.

"But this is not enough. There's no limit to what the market wants to see. The market sees itself as having a religious quest to force the Social Democrats to cut social spending and the welfare state," Mr. Holm said.

Economists say the budget's contents could encourage rating agency Standard Poor's (S.P.'s) to follow the example of Moody's and downgrade Sweden. Moody's sovereign debt last week and S.P.'s is reviewing Sweden at the moment.

Markets will watch to see whether the minority government is able to get its savings package through parliament.

UAE to base '95 budget on current oil prices

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is basing its 1995 budget on current oil prices, minister of state for finance and industry Ahmad Bin Humaid Al Tayar said Monday.

Asked by reporters what oil price the Arab Gulf state's budget would be based on, Mr. Tayar said: "Current prices."

"If there's any improvement (in oil prices) it will help, but we can't base a budget on that," he added, speaking after a weekly meeting of the UAE's cabinet in Abu Dhabi.

February futures for the world benchmark Brent Crude oil closed at around \$16.80 in London Friday. UAE President Zaid Bin Sultan Al Nahayan Monday issued a decree authorising monthly allocations equivalent to one-twelfth of the 1994 budget.

The Emirates News Agency which reported the decree said the allocations were in-

tended to pay mostly for salaries and social programmes until the new budget was ready.

Last year the cabinet approved the budget in February and Sheikh Zaid signed it into law in May.

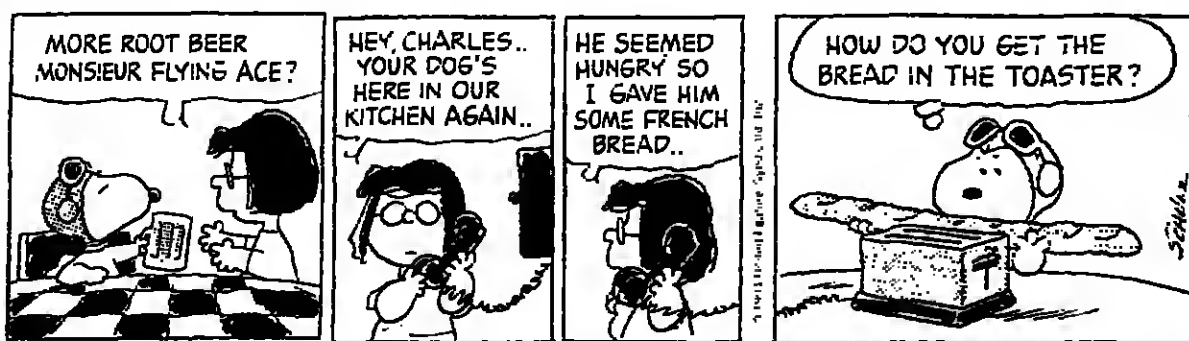
It has yet to approve the 1995 budget and Mr. Tayar declined to say how it might differ from last year's, which set revenues at 16.2 billion dirhams (\$4.4 billion) and spending at 17.61 billion (\$4.79 billion).

The UAE's 1994 budget incorporated spending cuts of about one per cent from the previous year's levels.

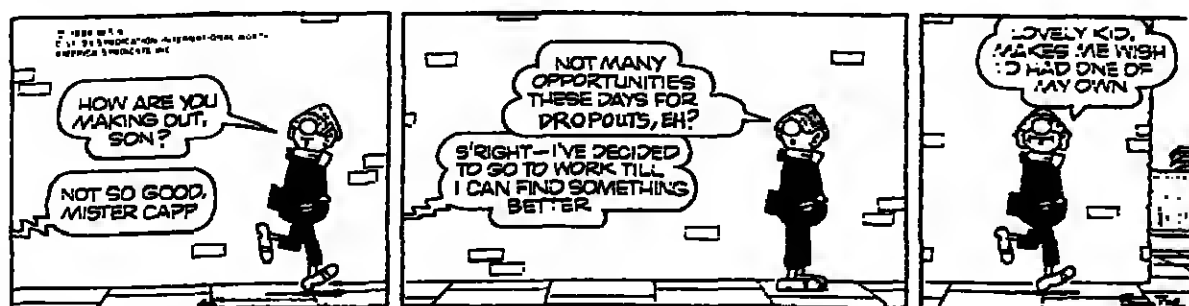
"Last year's (economic) performance was good but... the price and our (OPEC) quota... will affect expenditure at the federal and local level in 1995," Mr. Tayar said.

But he said any cuts in spending on public projects would come in the form of trimming costs rather than cancellations.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



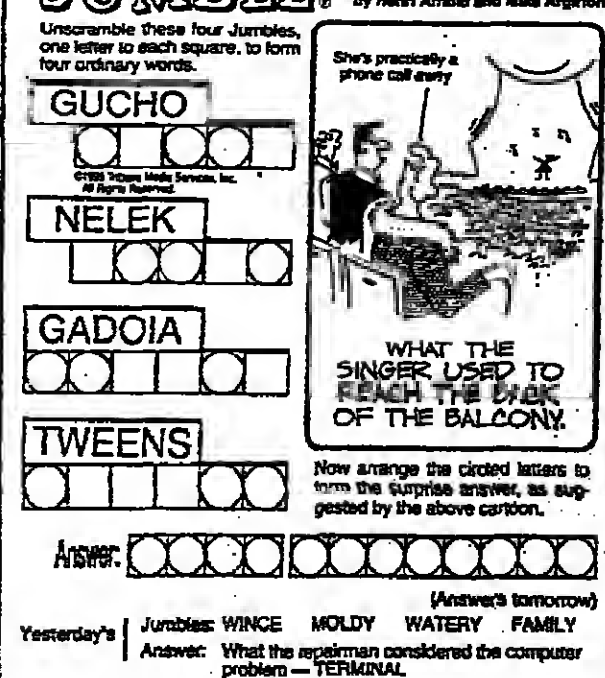
Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1995
By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: One of the best days this month to seek out those interests that appeal to you, and decide if you want to make them part of your life. Study your practical relationship with others and try to improve them.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be enthused about whatever your activities are and get much completed beautifully, even if delays occur. Take it easy tonight with your loved ones.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Plan early to get into new outlets which can fit you out of the doldrums and make your life happier and more profitable for the future.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There may be a myriad of small tasks to be handled at home, so see to it that they are done. Invite close friends in for the evening.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) First handle desk assignments wisely, then have important talks with fellow associates. Tonight is best for being with a companion.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be more practical and handle your affairs more intelligently. Be sure you handle financial affairs correctly. Be romantic in the evening with mate.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get yourself into the position which is most to your liking. Feel happier. You are a discriminating person and get fine results.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Early get business affairs attended to wisely, later, handle personal affairs quietly. Enjoy some romantic interlude in your own way.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Being with the most precise friends you know and getting their views for your personal advancement is wise now. Take it easy tonight.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day for handling any credit and career matters which are important. Gain backing from a powerful individual.

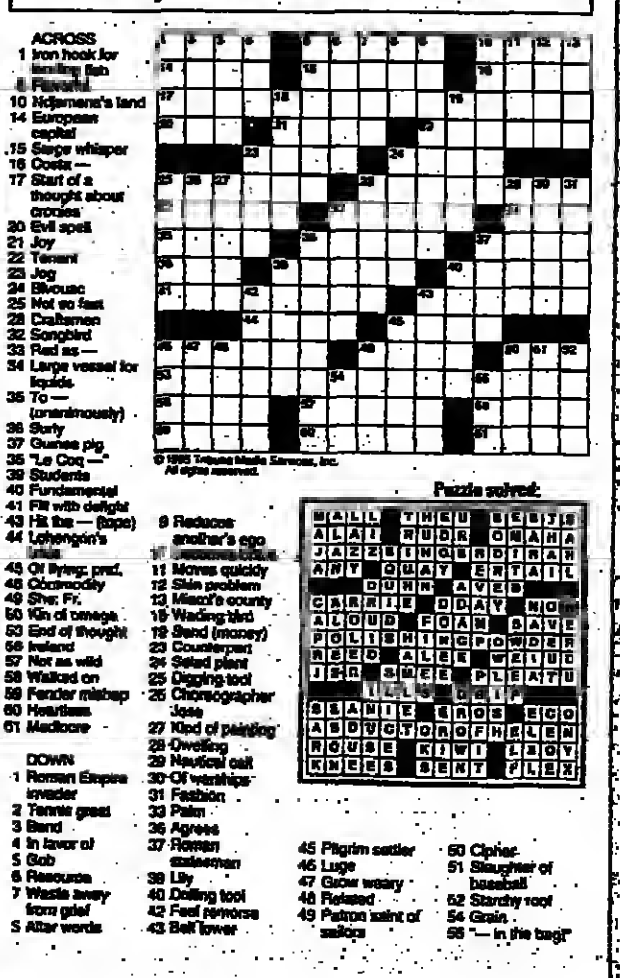
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Plan how to get out of that rut you are in. Cultivate a new acquaintance, and turn this person into a good friend who trusts.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get busy at business affairs which can give you a greater abundance and make property more valuable. Be happy with your mate.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Discussions with your partners can lead to something very worthwhile, so get in touch with them early. Be with a charming person.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

THE Daily Crossword by Florence C. Adler



business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Tyre prices expected to rise

According to some merchants, prices of tyres will be rising by about 10 per cent in the near future. The increase coincides with a government decision to stop issuing import permits for used tyres. The merchants complain that high customs on tyres, which have not been reduced along with other cars on spare parts, have kept the tyre market in a recession but they expect a gradual recovery with the depletion of used tyre stocks. The reaction towards using new Jordanian-made tyres was mixed. Some traders said they were competitive with foreign-made tyres and were carrying a six-month or 40,000-kilometre guarantee. Others were more specific, saying that although the Jordanian tyres were cheaper, they are only retreaded tyres that could only compete with the used foreign-made tyres. "They cannot endure high speed or temperatures and cannot withstand rough road condition," a trader noted (Al Aswak).

The minister of agriculture strongly rejected the idea to stop produce exports during the holy month of Ramadan in order to boost local supply and force prices down. He explained that such a measure would negatively affect farmers and threaten our presence on the overseas markets. The minister, Mansour Ben Tarif, said the people should learn to turn to alternatives if prices of certain products rise. He hoped that a direct relationship would develop between producers and consumers whereby farmers can sell directly to people in public markets on specific days (Al Aswak).

A comprehensive study has reportedly been done by the government to lift the subsidy on bread. Such a move will bring the cost of a kilogramme of bread to 150 fils but, according to knowledgeable sources, people who earn less than JD 200 a month will be protected from the price rise by being eligible for special coupons (Al Aswak).

Rice and milk coupons are reportedly being sold on the black market where some traders are buying the rice coupon at 50 fils and the milk coupon at 200 fils. Furthermore, some merchants are obtaining subsidised Chinese rice at 150 fils a kilogramme from the Ministry of Supply and selling it for 380 fils a kilogramme despite the fixing of the "free" price at 320 fils and the subsidised price at 170 fils (Al Aswak).

The Jordan Trade Association is organising an exhibition, to be held in the Sudanese capital, in early March to display products of Jordanian industries (Al Ra'i).

The Chamber of Commerce requested the authorities in Singapore to facilitate the entry of Jordanian businessmen to Singapore by giving them an entry visa at the airport. The chamber said that to have Jordanians obtain an entry visa to Singapore from Cairo was an impediment to free passage and to potential growth of trade between the two countries (Al Ra'i).

Workers at the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company are demanding a JD 20 monthly raise, an allowance for performing risky work at production sites, a 10 per cent increase in the allowance for "field work" and the payment of production bonus to all workers. The provision fund of the company's workers has grown to around JD 10 million and productive projects are being sought for their investment, aside from investments in shares and stocks at the Amman Financial Market (Al Dustour).

A mother shot and killed her drug-addicted son Monday after he threatened her for money to finance his habit. In her police statement, the mother said she was distressed after calling the police and telling them she had shot her son. Gilles told her son in his final moments in the room that he was a drug addict. A spokesman for the police said the mother was distraught and did not appear to realise she had killed her son. The mother had been taking her son for 14 years, and had spent money from his mother for some time.

S. Korea announced 'real name' measures to curb speculation

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Monday moved to nip an incipient land-price boom in the bud and bring transparency into a grey area of the economy by banning use of false or borrowed names in real estate transactions from July 1.

Buyers will face jail sentences of up to five years and fines equivalent to one third of land prices for using false or borrowed names.

Property owners will have to register under their own names by June 30.

The enactment and revision of the laws for implementing the system would be completed by April, Finance and Economy Minister Hong Jae-Hyong told a news conference here.

"The property real-name system, designed to standardize property transactions and stabilise prices, will lay solid foundation in pursuing overall price stability," Mr. Hong said.

The construction and transportation ministry will launch a nationwide computerised system from Jan. 25 to trace all property transaction records, a ministry official said.

The stock market here reacted favourably to the announcement, rising 9.52 points after a lacklustre week.

"For the stock market it is very good news," said

Eugene Yun, an economist with J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co. Ltd., adding:

"There had been a three year calm in real estate prices, and investors were moving their money in anticipation of boom taking off in the fourth year."

But some analysts voiced concerns about negative effects on the construction market, which accounts for 25 per cent of the nation's gross domestic product.

"If the government regulation is too tight, it would freeze the construction market," said Paik Kyung-Hwa, an analyst with Dongbank Peregrine Securities Co.

The step followed a New Year address last week by President Kim Young-Sam, in which he warned the measure would be brought into effect in this year.

"The property real-name system is in line with the real-name system on all financial transactions launched last year and is also a remarkable measure to achieve 'economic justice'," the president told a meeting of economy-related ministers.

The financial transaction real name system, introduced without warning on Aug. 12, 1993, forced major assets disclosures by ranking officials in the administration, legislature and judiciary and resulted in purge of officials.

Financial Markets

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close 10/11/95	Tokyo Close 10/11/95
Sterling Pound	1.5635	1.5620**
Deutsche Mark	1.5370	1.5362*
Swiss Franc	1.2675	1.2673**
French Franc	5.3145	5.3095**
Japanese Yen	99.90	100.13
European Currency Unit	1.2368	1.2365**

Interbank bid rates for accounts receiving U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	375.95	7.50	Silver	4.60	0.110

* M Karim

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7000	0.7020
Sterling Pound	0.6937	0.6992
Deutsche Mark	0.4546	0.4569
Swiss Franc	0.5428	0.5455
French Franc	0.1315	0.1322
Japanese Yen	0.0077	0.0078
Dutch Guilder	0.4056	0.4076
Scandinavian Krona	0.0431	0.0433
Holland Lira	0.0431	0.0433
Belgian Franc	0.0431	0.0433

Other Currencies

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8410	1.8550
Lebanese Lira	0.041735	0.042838
Saudi Riyal	0.1860	0.1872
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.5000	2.5000
Qatari Riyal	0.1910	0.1923
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2150
Omani Riyal	1.0660	1.0780
UAE Dirham	0.1900	0.1909
Greek Drachma	0.2775	0.2775
Cypriot Pound	1.4870	1.5085

For 100

Date: 10/11/1995

London Exchange Rates

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	Canadian dollar	Deutsche marks	Dutch guilders	Swiss francs	Belgian francs	French francs	Italian lire	Japanese yen	Swedish crowns	Norwegian crowns	Danish crowns
1.4082/92	1.5364/74	1.7228/38	1.2870/80	31.66/70	5.3130/80	1623.8/4.8	100.33/43	7.4925/25	6.7310/60	6.0575/25	1.5604/14
One sterling	373.85/374.25										

Pakistan smuggling booms despite tariff cuts

ISLAMABAD (R) — Smuggling into Pakistan, thinly disguised as transit trade to Afghanistan, has more than doubled in the past six months, despite government attempts to curb it by reducing tariffs on legal imports, officials say.

The smugglers typically bring in consumer goods such as refrigerators, television sets and air-conditioners, saying they are destined for war-ravaged Afghanistan, few of whose people have money to buy appliances or electricity to run them.

Officials say the goods, imported under a long-standing transit agreement with landlocked Afghanistan, seldom reach the Afghan border or if they do cross it, swiftly return.

"All indications are that smuggling has increased despite efforts to bring it down," said a senior customs official, who asked not to be named.

He said that imports under the Afghan transit trade shot up to 11 billion rupees (\$359 million) from July to December, the first six months of the 1994/95 fiscal year, compared to 5.3 billion rupees (\$173.2 million) in the same period the previous year.

Economists estimate the transit trade accounts for 50 to 60 per cent of all smuggling into Pakistan.

Pakistan's legal imports edged up to \$3.603 billion from July to November from \$3.520 billion in the same year-ago period, according to

the Federal Bureau of Statistics.

It is June budget, the government slashed maximum import tariffs to an average of 70 per cent from 92 per cent and raised excise duties on consumer goods regarded as popular contraband items to narrow the price gap between smuggled and legal goods.

This, it argued, would cut smugglers' profits and the volume of the illicit trade by half.

Government officials are now wondering why their strategy has apparently backfired.

Traders imported 38,000 refrigerators, ostensibly for Afghanistan, in the last six months of 1994, compared to 5,000 in the same 1993

period. The figure for air-conditioners jumped to 98,000 from 4,000 and television sets to 295,000 from 38,000.

"These figures beat me," the customs official said. "We expected a decrease after removing the incentive for smuggling, but that has not happened so far."

A.R. Kemal, director of the Pakistani Institute of Development Economics, estimates smuggled goods were worth \$4 billion in fiscal 1993/94, or 30 per cent of total imports.

He said tariff cuts were too small to wreck the profits of smugglers and increased vigi-

lance at airport customs posts may have forced them to rely more on the Afghan transit trade.

Large-scale smuggling deprives Pakistan of badly needed revenue and hits local industry producing similar goods.

Nasim Ahmad, marketing director of Phillips Electrical Industries, said smuggling of television sets was cutting into the company's sales and profit margins.

"The industry is hurting in terms of production and profit," he said. "The government has to make up its mind whether it wants to protect local industry or not."

Saatchi shaken by defection of executives

LONDON (R) — Saatchi and Saatchi, the world's second-largest advertising agency, has been shaken by a new turn in its grim boardroom battle — the resignations of three top executives in support of deposed chairman Maurice Saatchi.

The advertising giant suffered the further blow Monday as the three quit only a week after co-founder Maurice Saatchi was forced out by a key U.S. investor.

British newspapers said Tuesday the agency faced a threat of defection by several leading clients.

The Financial Times said Charles and Maurice Saatchi, the brothers who founded the firm in the 1970s, had dispensed of their remaining stake in the firm, selling their 1.8 million shares at the beginning of last week.

The resignations of acting chairman Jeremy Sinclair and U.S. and U.K. managers Bill Muirhead and David Kershaw came a week after Maurice was ousted by a group of U.S. investors led by David Herro of Chicago-based fund manager Harris Associates.

"Industry insiders were speculating further big names might soon join the dissidents and that important accounts could be lost as clients express their disapproval," the Times said.

"Mars, the American confectioner, and British Airways have both indicated formally that their accounts are under review," the newspaper added.

None of Saatchi's big clients have yet announced any rupture with the group although Mars said in December it was reviewing its huge worldwide advertising account.

Saatchi and Saatchi said

the departure of the three was not the end of the world. It appointed chief executive Charlie Scott as acting chairman and naming Michael Bungey and Ed Wax as the new board members.

But the departures sent a shock wave through the industry.

A week ago the stock traded between 138 pence and 146 pence. On Monday it lost 16 pence to close at 124.

The three attacked the influence of Mr. Herro.

"I no longer feel that the people who control our company understand what we really do," Mr. Muirhead said in his resignation letter, printed in the London newspaper The Evening Standard along with those of Mr. Kershaw and Mr. Sinclair.

"I now feel totally compromised by Mr. Herro and the board's decision to oust Maurice Saatchi," particularly as it was against the express wishes of several of our clients, including a number I am personally close to," he added.

Mr. Scott told the Financial Times that the resignations were a "cynical campaign to destabilise the group" and said it would hold the three to the notice period of their contracts, which would keep the three at the group for at least 12 months.

"It is a shame that good people had to leave," said Mr. Herro.

But he denied claims of excessive meddling in the management of the agency. "My only interest is that the group's directors represent shareholders' interests," he told the newspaper.

Analysts said there must now be speculation that the three will set up a new agency with Mr. Maurice and maybe attract some clients from the Saatchi Group.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SEMBIZAN				
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 10/01/1995				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE
ARAB BANK	300	552.00	183.750	184.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	4299	8448	4.310	4.320
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	5478	2312	4.230	4.250
BANK OF JORDAN	556	2123	3.800	3.750
THE HOUSING BANK	2000	17438	5.750	5.820
JORDAN KUNAF BANK	1415	4297	3.030	3.040
JORDAN GULF BANK	3300	5324	1.640	1.620
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	2525	9352	3.750	3.700
BUSINESS BANK	750	500	2.630	3.600
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	25400	3251	1.500	1.500
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	750	7071	4.050	4.100
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	1150	1922	1.690	1.680
BANKS SECTOR	46292	159165	INDEX NUMBER: 159.22	CHANGE: -0.001
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	500	1230	2.460	2.460
JORDAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	4700	14200	3.050	3.000
INSURANCE SECTOR	5200	35330	INDEX NUMBER: 137.27	CHANGE: -0.117
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	3458	8360	2.450	2.450
JORDAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	10767	16100	1.500	1.500
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	100	280	2.900	2.800
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	140	699	5.100	5.020
JORDAN GULF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	450	1445	3.200	3.210
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CO-ORDINATE HOTELS	9000	1548	1.270	1.300
ARAB TRAVEL FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1750	4323	2.470	2.480
SERVICES SECTOR	1520	5241	3.450	3.450
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	8812	25993	2.950	2.950
THE ARAB POTASH/NEW	500	2750	5.500	5.500
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	800	4369	5.540	5.450
SPINNING & WEAVING	250	683	2.720	2.730
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	2100	5786	2.710	2.750
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	1300	1365	1.060	1.050
ARAB ALUMINUM INDUSTRIES	460	3354	7.450	7.300
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	1650	1551	950	940
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	1350	1917	1.420	1.420
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	600	2532	4.200	4.220
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	150	638	4.300	4.200
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & HOTELS/ITMO	1050	1618	1.640	1.640
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	500	5564	5.320	5.500
JORDAN SULOCH-CHEMICALS	600	1166	1.950	1.950
KAWTHAR INVESTMENT	500	895	1.800	1.770
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	750	3352	4.300	4.170
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	1300	2754	2.150	2.140
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	32613	74081	INDEX NUMBER: 129.71	CHANGE: -0.304
GRAND TOTAL	111390	304328	INDEX NUMBER: 145.16	CHANGE: -0.153
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET			287496	
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET			328440	

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Paris-Dakar Rally Vatanen breakdown puts him out of contention

CHINGUETTI, Mauritania (R) — A broken radiator cost Ari Vatanen all chance of a fifth title in the Dakar Rally. He ended up stranded in the desert on Monday and unable to defend the lead he has held for the best part of a week.

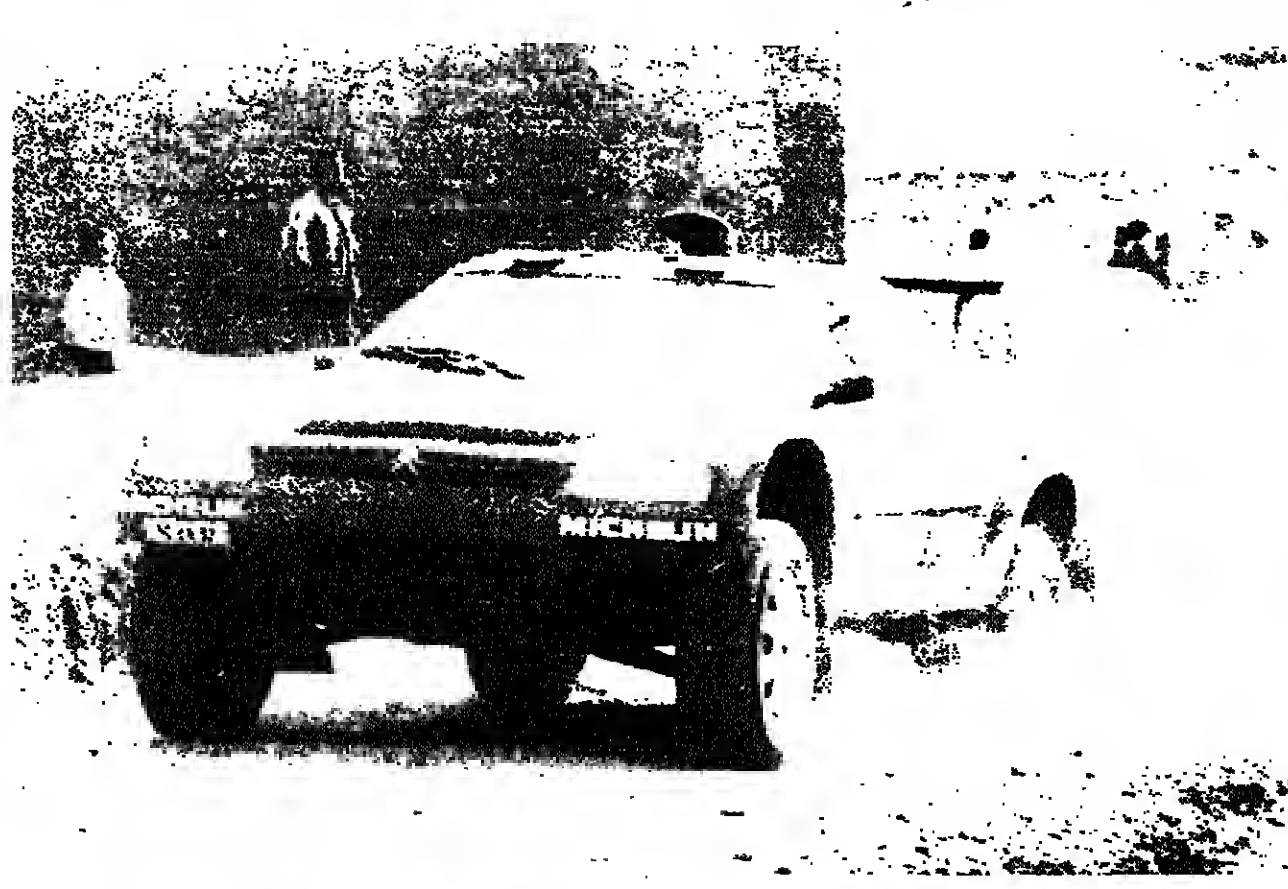
Vatanen's Citroen broke down after 467 kms of the 504-km eighth leg from Zouerat across the Mauritanian sands.

He managed to buy water from local nomads and got his car going. But he broke down again a few kilometres later.

His Citroen teammate, Pierre Lartigue, last year's rally winner, gained the overall lead after a tough day's driving during which winds whipped up a sandstorm.

Lartigue leads by just over 20 minutes from 1993 winner Bruno Saby, driving a Mitsubishi. Barring a double mishap, the two Frenchmen are the only ones with a realistic chance of winning the race which finishes in Dakar Sunday. Third-placed Kenjiro Shinozuka of Japan is more than two-and-a-half hours behind in his Mitsubishi.

Spain's Jordi Afcarons retained the lead in the motorcycle section on his Cagiva but a thrilling finish can be expected with three-times winner Stephane Peterhansel of France only seven minutes behind on a Yamaha.



Finnish driver Ari Vatanen speeds through a village in Morocco during the third stage of the Paris-Dakar Rally (AFP photo)

Frenchman Thierry Magnaldi is well in contention on his Yamaha and last year's winner, Cagiva rider Edi Orioli of Italy, is not entirely out of sight.

The sand storm caused major problems for most of the riders. Former race leader Heinz Kinigadner of Austria and American Danny Laporte lost considerable time after getting bogged down in soft sand.

Thrill sport costs lives for death-wish kids

PARIS (AFP) — The winter boom sport snowboarding has been given a new and dangerous twist on the ski slopes of Europe. The sport which took off in the United States has gathered a cult following among kids seeking thrills at all costs.

For them that means dicing with death by avalanche surfing — using the base of their board to kick-start snow slips then riding their crest for kicks.

The spate of deaths on the European ski slopes in the last month — six in one weekend alone — was blamed by resort officials mostly on the irresponsibility of people who wandered off piste and were swallowed in avalanches on dangerous tracts of snow.

The new breed of winter sports fan scorns the crowd and heads for the virgin snow, high on the cols were the real thrills, and dangers, are to be found.

"My wardens spend their days being insulted when they advise these kids not to go off piste," said Jean Neel, head official at the Val d'Isere ski resort in the French Alps.

"Then they spend their evenings being insulted again when the kids come back and say 'we're still here'."

The worst thing is the flouting of regulations," said Jean-Loup Costerg, an official at Val d'Isere who is in overall charge of piste maintenance and security for all French ski resorts.

"People go anywhere anytime, after heavy snow falls or high wind. There are specialist magazines that tell them to do just that to get their kicks at all costs."

At Val d'Isere, a group of young Swedish snowboarders recently went in search of thrills away from the regulations ski runs and found tragedy instead. Richard Olof Holger, 24, died in an avalanche and one of his friends was injured.

"In that accident with the Swedes at Val d'Isere they were having fun setting off their own avalanches. The third one got them," said Costerg.

Snowboarding was brought to Europe from

the United States in the late 1980s and has since won thousands of fans all over the world.

The sport has developed into a multi-million-dollar industry with its own World Cup series, and with the backing of International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch, the sport is hoping to make its Olympic debut at the Nagano Games in Japan in 1998.

But on the ski slopes of Europe snowboarders are the outlaws, flouting the rules and flirting with danger.

The director of one Alpine resort said recently that security in ski resorts in the United States was far tighter than in Europe.

"On the slopes over there, rule-breakers are hanged," he said. "They just get told to go home. Here they do what they want. Nobody lays down the law."

This season has brought more snowboarders than ever before to the Alpine ski stations and most obey the same rules as the more traditional winter sports fans. But many don't and a few pay a heavy price.

German teenager Christophe just wanted an extra thrill in La Plagne in the French Alps. The 19-year-old ducked under a safety cordon with two friends and ignored at least one danger sign.

He never came back, carried off in an avalanche and a resort warden told later how he pleaded with the three teenagers to stay on the piste.

Seven people were killed on the slopes in Austria within two days last week, most of them on virgin snow off the normal ski runs.

At least one was a snowboarder, a 25-year-old Australian who started his own avalanche and whose body was recovered a day later along with three Germans who were also swept to their deaths.

With fresh avalanche warning posted this week in the Alps and the Pyrenees, the danger for the death-wish kids is greater than ever.



Picture taken 20 August 1973 in Copenhagen showing Argentine Carlos Monzon (left) during his fight against Tom Nags of Denmark. Carlos Monzon, one of the great boxers of all-time was killed in a car accident Saturday as he was driving back to his home.

Boxing great Monzon dies on way to prison

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Carlos Monzon, one of the great boxers of all-time, was killed in a car accident on Sunday as he was driving back to prison.

The former world middleweight champion, sentenced to 11 years in 1983 for the murder of his wife, had been on parole for good behaviour. He was returned to prison from his home in Santa Fe.

Monzon knocked out the legendary Italian Nino Benvenuti in the 12th round in November, 1970, in Rome and defended his title 14 times up to 1977.

He retired after his second 15-rounder with Colombia's Rodrigo Valdez at Monte Carlo in July, 1977.

"He was one of the greatest," said Benvenuti,

the 1960 Olympic welterweight champion who was knocked out in three rounds in their re-match in 1971 in Monte Carlo. "He has to be remembered for his sporting career and not for the trouble he got into afterwards."

Eleven of Monzon's world title fights were in Europe and one of the best was a pulsating 15-rounder against Frenchman Jean-Claude Bonnier in Paris in 1973 when he became a friend of actor Alain Delon.

The movie world became his second career although he will not be remembered for his string of hit parts in spaghetti-style films.

He was convicted and jailed for murdering his wife Alicia Muniz, by throwing her off the balcony of the house in February, 1983.

Argentine President Carlos Menem said: "I'm very sad. I stayed in contact with Carlos Monzon by letter and also through mutual friends like Alain Delon. In these type of circumstances one thinks the good he did for Argentina."

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	

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PHILADELPHIA		PLAZA		CONCORD		AMMOUN THEATRE		Nabil Al Mashini Theatre		AHLAN THEATRE	
Jim Carrey in THE MASK Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30		Julia Roberts/Nick Nolte in I Love Trouble Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 The Lion King Shows: 10:30, 12:30, 3:30, 5:00		CONCORD "1" Sylvester Stallone - Sharon Stone THE SPECIALIST Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD "2" Harrison Ford - Whitney Houston — THE BODYGUARD Shows: 3, 5		will soon present: Mousa Hijazin (SUM'AA) In the satirical political comedy: Hi Citizen		Presents Abu Awwad in the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day		Presents: The political satire: Al Salam Ya Salam Daily at 8:30 Saturday & Sunday is the theatre's holiday. in English Sunday January 15, 1995	

IAEA has no evidence of nuclear arms in Iran

VIENNA (Agencies) — The United Nations nuclear agency said on Tuesday it had no evidence from its regular inspections of Iran that the country was building nuclear weapons.

David Kyd, spokesman of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said the Vienna-based agency had found nothing to support claims made by U.S. and Israeli leaders on Monday that Iran could build a nuclear bomb within seven to 15 years.

"We inspect Iran on a quarterly basis and we have found nothing indicative of a programme other than for peaceful purposes," Mr. Kyd told Reuters.

"We have found the Iranians in compliance with their obligations to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)," he added.

But he said the IAEA "doesn't give Iran a clean bill of health any more than any other country."

U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Monday they believed Iran could build a nuclear bomb within seven to 15 years.

IAEA officials have said the agency was aware of various intelligence estimates that Iran could have nuclear weapons within even five years, but said they had no evidence that would support those predictions.

A senior Iranian official meanwhile Tuesday dismissed U.S. concern about Iran's atomic potential as evidence of pro-Israeli bias and reiterated that Iran opposed the presence of nuclear weapons in the Gulf.

Iranian First Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Hashemi said during a visit to Kuwait that if Washington was concerned about dealing fairly with the region it should force its ally Israel to open its arsenal to international nuclear inspection.

"We have always declared that we are against the presence of a nuclear, biological or chemical weapon or any weapon of mass destruction in the region," he told Reuters when asked about reports that Iran might develop its own nuclear weapons.

"If America had any credibility... it must force or oblige Israel to open its borders for international search by the nuclear energy agency (IAEA)," Mr. Hashemi said.

"The Americans know that these aims and subjects fall under a selective policy... thus, American credibility in this region has fallen, and the people of the world know the Americans' behaviour," he added.

Mr. Perry said Monday Washington was working with republics of the former Soviet Union to ensure they did not transfer nuclear weapons or technology to the Islamic republic.

Israel is widely believed to have nuclear weapons but has consistently refused to confirm or deny their possession.

Egyptian Foreign Minister

Amr Musa has said Israel was endangering Middle East peace by stockpiling nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction.

"Peace in the Middle East is under threat because Israel continues to accumulate weapons of total destruction... Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal the extent of which no one knows," Mr. Musa told parliament late on Monday.

"The world must be told what is going on in this field so that it realises the extent of the danger threatening the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction," he added.

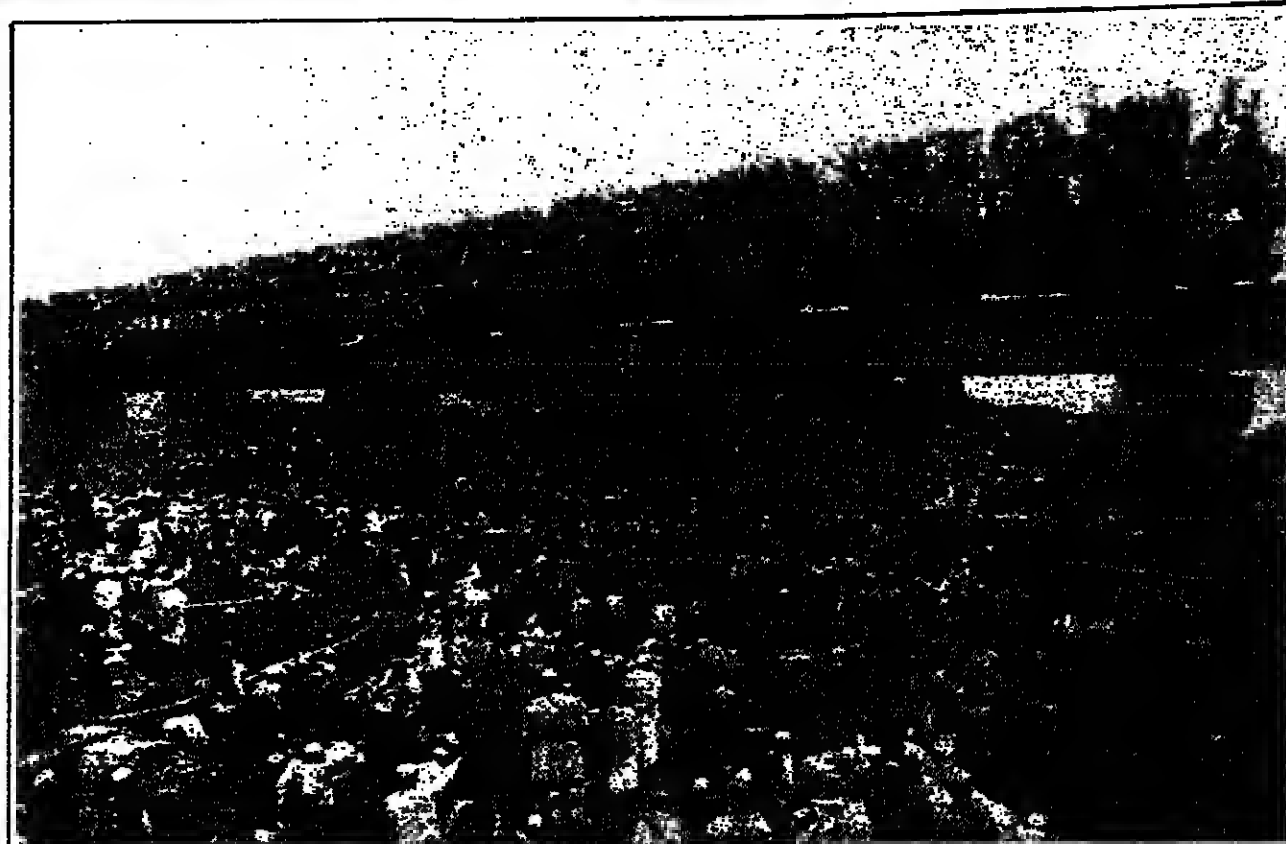
Egypt, the first Arab country to make peace with Israel, has proposed making the Middle East a region free of all nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

But Israel, arguing that some Middle East states are still hostile, has not opened its nuclear programme to international inspection.

The dispute has been gathering momentum as the United States lobbies Middle East states to vote for an extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in Geneva in April.

Mr. Perry, on a visit to Cairo last week, said the treaty was of worldwide importance.

"I told President (Hosni) Mubarak the U.S. regarded an extension of the treaty as important not just for the region but for the whole world and I will say the same thing to Israel," he told reporters.



CONGREGATION: An overcrowded train crosses a bridge carrying thousands of Muslim pilgrims to Tongi in Bangladesh. At least two million people converged on a muddy field near Tongi for the biggest Muslim gathering after the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (AFP photo)

Israeli jets raid Hizbollah position

TYRE, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli warplanes attacked a post of the Hizbollah group in South Lebanon on Tuesday after its guerrillas wounded two Israeli soldiers, security sources said.

They said at least one rocket was fired at a Hizbollah (Party of God) position on Mita hill in Iqlim Al Toufah, a ridge 40 kilometres south of Beirut used by the group to launch attacks on Israel's occupation zone in the south.

There was no immediate word on casualties in the air strike, the first into Lebanon this year.

A Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut confirmed the air raid.

Earlier on Tuesday guerrillas attacked a series of posts of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, wounding two militiamen, SLA sources said.

They said guerrillas fired mortar bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and machineguns at eight SLA posts in the Jezzine area in a finger of territory jutting north of Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon.

Hizbollah said in a statement its fighters at around midnight assaulted 11 Israeli army and SLA positions in the Jezzine area and in the border zone, inflicting several casualties.

In retaliation, Israel and SLA artillerymen fired about 150 shells near Mashghara and Ain Al Tineh villages, prompting many villagers to flee to safer areas, the sources added.

One of the SLA militiamen wounded in Tuesday's attack was reported to be in critical condition.

It was the second series of attacks in five days on that area of the zone, which is adjacent to the southern sector of the Bekaa Valley.

A spokesman for Hizbollah's armed wing in the town of Mashghara, in the southern sector of the Bekaa Valley, said guerrillas attacked SLA positions and succeeded in occupying two of them in Kfarina and Tumat Nih.

"Our combatants returned safely to their bases after briefly occupying the two positions," the spokesman said.

The SLA's Voice of the South radio said it pushed back the assault.

On Monday Hizbollah guerrillas killed an SLA militiaman and wounded an Israeli soldier in attacks which were followed by a six-hour gunbattle.

Lebanese police said meanwhile Israel was adopting guerrilla warfare tactics to fight the anti-Israeli resistance in Lebanon by launching ambushes north of its self-declared "security zone."

Patrols of 10 to 15 members are infiltrating outside the occupied zone and taking up positions in the adjacent valleys normally used by anti-Israeli fighters, a police spokesman said.

"They are staying there all night, waiting for the hope of trapping them."

The Israeli army had abandoned such methods after an incident in May 1993 when two of its patrols mistook each other for guerrillas and opened fire killing four and wounding three.

U.N. troops evacuate Mogadishu compound

MOGADISHU (AFP) — U.N. troops and staff retreated to the airport Tuesday from their sprawling compound inside Mogadishu, covered by helicopter gunships as they prepared to end the troubled two-year U.N. mission in Somalia.

Offshore, just over the horizon, a French warship stood guard, U.N. officials said.

Both the compound and the U.N.-controlled airport are vulnerable to stray gunfire as clans battle in the streets of south Mogadishu, but the area was relatively quiet Tuesday with only the usual rattle of occasional small-arms fire.

Fighting between rival Somali militias has surged as the U.N. operation winds down towards a final pullout date of March 31, with close to 200 people being killed and some 700 wounded since early December.

Many U.N. soldiers expect the warring clans to fight for control of the U.N. compound, the airport and the seaport as the final troops leave protected by an international off-shore force.

At the airport — living in tents and quarters made from shipping containers tucked in behind sandhills — the troops

and some 350 U.N. civilian personnel will disperse to other parts of the world as the U.N. Operation in Somalia ends.

The move to the airport will be completed by the weekend, officials said, but a 950-strong security battalion of Pakistani troops will remain at the 33-hectare compound to deter looters as civilian contractors remove whatever is salvageable of the \$150 million worth of equipment still there.

Other Pakistani soldiers will stay at force headquarters just over the road.

The 8,400 U.N. troops remaining in this lawless Horn of Africa country — mostly Pakistanis, Egyptians and Bangladeshis — will all be gone by the end of March, their pullout a result of the failure of Somalia's rival warlords to agree on a government of national unity.

The U.N. soldiers have already pulled back from the hinterland, with all based now in this violent Indian Ocean city, hunkered down behind razor-wire.

The soldiers are still manning a few checkpoints in Mogadishu, but their presence does not deter the circulation of the pick-up truck battle-wagons.

French Muslims create group

PARIS (R) — Leaders of France's five million Muslims, acting with government encouragement, announced the creation on Tuesday of a body to handle the delicate relationship between their community and French officials.

Dati Boubakeur, imam of the main Paris mosque who will head the group, said it was called the Representative Council of Muslims in France (CRMF).

Mr. Boubakeur and other traditionalist Muslim leaders spoke at a news conference presided by Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, who has long pressed France's Muslims to create such a group as a barrier to Islamic fundamentalism.

"We wish to serve our community and French society since Islam is now the second largest religion in France. With this new organisation, we will now have the same status as other religions in the country," Mr. Boubakeur said.

Mr. Pasqua, who has carried out crackdowns in the past year against suspected fundamentalists linked to Islamic underground groups in Algeria, said France would speak only with the CRMF from now on when dealing with Muslim issues.

He broadly hinted at government financial backing for the group since most Muslims in France are poor immigrants from north or West Africa.

Mr. Pasqua and Mr. Boubakeur insisted the new body represented virtually all Muslim organisations in France with the notable exception of the fundamentalist-leaning National Federation of Muslims in France.

They acknowledged, however, that most Muslims in France were not members of any groups. Hundreds of thousands of unemployed youths are outside organised structures and Mr. Pasqua fears they are the ones likely to be recruited by fundamentalists.

Recent opinion polls have showed between five and 10 per cent of Muslims in France sympathise with fundamentalist aims while the vast majority seek integration into society at large and are sometimes only nominally religious.

French authorities were locked last year in a struggle with fundamentalists seeking to encourage young Muslim girls to wear headscarves in the country's secular public schools against regulations.

Mr. Pasqua said Paris frowned on foreign governments offering funds to Muslim groups in France, as they have until now, but he recognised it was the duty of individual rich Muslims to help brethren abroad.

Rich Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, have paid in the past to build mosques and create religious schools in France, where the dominant religion is Roman Catholicism.

Mr. Pasqua's statement was understood to mean such funds would still be welcome if they came under the guise of individual private donations.

COLUMN

Charles' friend Camilla to divorce

LONDON (R) — Camilla Parker Bowles — the close friend of Prince Charles — and her cavalry officer husband are to divorce by mutual consent, lawyers for the couple said Tuesday. "We have grown apart to such an extent that with the exception of our children and a lasting friendship, there is little of common interest between us and we have therefore decided to seek a divorce," a statement from the lawyers said. Solicitors Boodle Hatfield and Charles Russell said the couple had lived apart for two years and a decree nisi — a provisional order for divorce — would be granted this month. The announcement confirmed intense speculation that their 21-year marriage would not be able to withstand Camilla's long relationship with the heir to the throne. Prince Charles, who separated from his wife Princess Diana two years ago, admitted last year he had committed adultery since his marriage broke down. He also said he was very close to Camilla, who has never spoken publicly of her relationship with the prince. Britain's tabloid Sun newspaper said Tuesday Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles, who stood by his wife when the publicity broke over the affair, was taking the step because he felt the "time was right to start a new life".

Most Britons want to halve cost of royalty

LONDON (R) — Most Britons want to halve the cost of the monarchy and think the number of royal palaces and staff should be reduced, a survey published Tuesday said. The ICM royalty poll in the Guardian newspaper found that 53 per cent of Britons want the monarchy's overall cost to the taxpayer, estimated at £50 million (\$77 million) a year, to be cut. "The same percentage want the five royal palaces financed by the taxpayer... to be reduced to two," the newspaper said. "Slightly more — 54 per cent — want the royal yacht Britannia to be shared with business as a floating conference centre," it added. The random poll of 1,003 adults also found that 56 per cent of the people questioned said the 750 palace staff that are paid by the taxpayer should be reduced by half. "Eighteen per cent want no public money to be paid to the royal family... 32 per cent want the royal yacht taken out of service and 15 per cent want no public money spent on palaces and staff," the newspaper added. The findings support suggested plans by Britain's opposition Labour Party outlined by home affairs spokesman Jack Straw. He suggested sacking half of the country's royal highnesses and turning those who remained into a low-key Scandinavian-style monarchy.

Hillary Clinton trying to reshape image — paper

NEW YORK (R) — First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said she had been "naïve and dumb" about national politics and asked a group of women writers for suggestions on how she could make her public image more likeable, the New York Times reported Tuesday. "I am surprised at the way people seem to perceive me, and sometimes I read stories and hear things about me and I go 'ugh, I wouldn't like her either.' It's so unlike what I think I am," Mrs. Clinton was quoted as telling the writers at a luncheon at the White House. "So I can only guess that people are getting perceptions about me from things I am saying or doing in ways that don't correspond with things I am trying to get across..." she said. The guests were a group of women writers who cover style, gossip, personal advice and the first lady's social functions, the newspaper said. The paper said that while a year ago Mrs. Clinton said the failure in Congress of her health care plan was due to a male-dominated political system having trouble accepting her position of authority, in Monday's interview she put most of the blame on herself.

2 sentenced to death for Mahfouz attack

HUCKSTEP, Egypt (AFP) — A military court on Tuesday sentenced two Islamic militants to death for attempting to kill Egypt's Nobel Prize winning author Naguib Mahfouz.

The high military court at Huckstep base just north of Cairo sentenced to death Mohammad Naguib Mohammad, Mustafa, 21, for stabbing Mr. Mahfouz outside his Cairo home on Oct. 14 and Mohammad Khodier Al Mahalawi, 22, for spying on the author.

Eleven militants were also sentenced to hard labour for either participating in the attack or for other militant activities and three others were acquitted.

Following the verdicts Islamic militants chanted "prison or execution will not make us forsake Islam," and warned "Oh Jews, Mohammad's army will return."

Mr. Mahfouz, 83, who won the Nobel prize in 1988 and is the only Arab writer to have received the honour, spent 50 days in hospital mostly in intensive care following the attack.

He is an outspoken critic of the government and Islamic hardliners in a weekly newspaper column, and strongly supports Arab-Israeli peace moves.

Egyptians were outraged at the attack against one of the

country's most popular figures, a diminutive man with trademark dark glasses and a regular at Cairo cafes for chats about literature.

But militants have accused him of blasphemy and in 1989 threatened him for his book "The Children of Our District," in which he depicts God as a father and the prophets as his children. Muslim authorities banned the book.

The trial opened on Dec. 6 when the 16 defendants alleged they had been tortured during interrogation. The court gave life sentences of hard labour to Amr Mohammad Ibrahim, 24, who gave the knife to the assailant, and to Hussein Ali Bakr Awad, 20.

It also sentenced one militant to 15 years hard labour, two to seven years, one to five years and five to three years of hard labour. Three were acquitted, including the youngest defendant, a 17-year-old schoolboy.

Ibrahim visited Mahfouz's house on the eve of the attack, bearing a box of chocolates and dressed like someone from the Gulf to get close to the writer to kill him. But the author was out, his wife Ateyat Mahfouz said.

Ibrahim was wounded in the leg in a shoot-out during his arrest in a cafe in northern Cairo. A militant accused of



Naguib Mahfouz

being the brains behind the attack, Bassem Shahin, was killed in the gun-battle.

President Hosni Mubarak has charged military courts with trying Muslim militants as cases are generally tried quicker and there is no right to appeal.

"Every law in the world condemns military tribunals but Egypt insists on judging Islamists before these courts while pretending to respect human rights," said Ahmad Hosni, a computer operator in a Cairo firm, who was sentenced to three years.

Another defendant sentenced to three years was a retired Egyptian army officer, Mustafa Abdul Bahi, a court official said.

Medical student Yasser Abu Aita, 25, got seven years after police found explosives in his room on the campus of Cairo University.

Berlusconi demands reappointment as premier or immediate elections

ROME (AFP) — Outgoing Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi called Tuesday on President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to reappoint him as head of a new government or call immediate elections.

"We have called on the president of the republic to accept an attempt to form a new government led by Berlusconi because of the way the political situation is developing," the business tycoon-cum-politician said after meeting Mr. Scalfaro.

If Mr. Scalfaro declined reappointing him, the only solution to the current political impasse would be "immediate elections," Mr. Berlusconi added. The two men had also met Monday.

Mr. Berlusconi's ultimatum came a day after most political commentators forecast that Mr. Scalfaro would name a new head of government close to Mr. Berlusconi's own right-wing Forza Italia party.

Several key political figures, including Berlusconi allies, have supported such a solution.

Mr. Berlusconi resigned on Dec. 22 after the break-up of his four-party coalition, sparking the crisis put in hold last week when Mr. Scalfaro fell ill and was

forced to suspend meetings on resolving the stalemate.

The president, who has said he is against calling snap elections, is due to finish off meetings with all Italy's different political forces by Wednesday, and sources said he would probably name a new prime minister on Thursday.

Mr. Berlusconi's stance was endorsed earlier by Gianfranco Fini, leader of the neo-fascist National Alliance, one of four parties on the Berlusconi team before it collapsed last month.

"We will ask Scalfaro to allow us to create a new government directed by Silvio Berlusconi," Mr. Fini said. "If a second Berlusconi government is not possible, early elections are the only route possible."

If Mr. Scalfaro decides against dissolving the two chambers, "we will not support any government that does not reflect the vote" in the general elections last March that swept Mr. Berlusconi to power, Mr. Fini said.

He said Mr. Berlusconi made the demand to stay on at a meeting with Mr. Scalfaro that ran late into Monday night. The meeting "went badly," Mr. Berlusconi said.

Observers here had suggested Mr. Scalfaro might seek to appoint as premier Lamberto Dini, the treasury minister and a former general-director of the Italian central bank, or Mario Monti, European commissioner in charge of the internal market. Both men are seen as close to Forza Italia.

Mr. Dini is not a deputy and could be called upon to act in a caretaker capacity, much as was the case for Mr. Berlusconi's predecessor, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, a former governor of the Bank of Italy.

Mr. Ciampi, who spent a year in power, was chosen notably to help amend electoral rules which emerged from a reform of legislation in 1993.

Mr. Berlusconi has said he is opposed to such a choice, but observers suggest he might accept it once it is imposed by the president.

Mr. Dini would be backed in parliament by the left and centre parties, along with part of the Northern League.

Northern League leader Umberto Bossi, whose defection from government caused its collapse, Monday faxed all of his deputies to ask them where they stood on supporting him or Mr. Berlusconi.